

LOVE LIVE FORGIVE

Insights from Artists

EDITED BY: JUSTIN ST. VINCENT

LOVE LIVE FORGIVE:
Insights from Artists

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Prelude

Love Live Forgive is a journey into the relationship between creative expression and a range of powerful values such as love, forgiveness, and compassion. All contributors to this publication are artists from a dynamic spectrum of artistic, cultural, and faith-based backgrounds. Individually they express their own personal values for creativity, love, and forgiveness. Collectively they embrace a shared passion for art and its ability to inspire our lives and transform our view of the world around us.

Artists are often visionaries of culture, community, and creed. They help interpret our world through their own unique lens of creativity, imagination, and personal values. Together this illuminates our understanding of the virtues that bring meaning to life and significance to our existence. Artists have the powerful ability to create immense beauty where none was found before. They write the poems, carve the statues, paint the pictures, and sing the songs that define us and reflect the essential heart of humanity.

Over one hundred exclusive interviews from a diverse range of artists have been specially selected for this project to explore the power of love and forgiveness through art. The artists represented in this book are sharing their experiences, inspirations, and stories revealing the powerful intersections that exist between artistry and the deeper meanings of our emotional life. This project is grounded as an exploration into creativity, love, forgiveness, spirituality, the inner-life, and the potential for transformation. Designed to help develop our own understanding of the intersection of artistry and such values, each chapter begins with an introduction and includes reflection questions to consider while reading. Each chapter concludes with an opportunity to integrate and apply the lessons into our own lives.

We invite you to join the journey as we explore how art can help us communicate love and forgiveness to the world.

artistry

LOVE
LIVE
FORGIVE

Art has served humanity throughout the ages: from ritualistic and symbolic functions to expressions of the personal and mystical, and as a record of culture, community, and creed. Those who create art have discovered a unique path of creative expression that suits their abilities and interests and serves art's many functions. Through their craft, these artists convey an experience, expression, story, or mood, all to share an idea, sell a product, or simply offer an aesthetic expression of their personal beliefs.

Art often appeals to and connects with our human emotions. It can arouse pleasure, disgust, sadness, or joy as well as elicit complex moral considerations or judgments. When artists convey love and forgiveness and other emotions and values through their medium of choice, they are inviting a deeper consideration of their work, allowing an audience to consider both the emotional and aesthetic. Art has a profound capacity to explore and express the complexity of the human condition and artists who are highly attuned to their craft can do this effortlessly. For the artists presented in this opening chapter, their attention to their craft allows them a deep understanding of the symbiotic relationship of artist and audience. They hope that the presentation of their work offers the space and time for an audience to learn or process their emotional responses. They also understand the inherent and ongoing exploration of their own inner life that their artistry offers.

These artists provide a unique view into this world of creativity and craft, artist and audience. We learn from filmmaker and producer Frank Fitzpatrick that his creative life and work has made him: "more open and appreciative of the differences between people and cultures." Film and TV composer George S. Clinton shares his view of art as a healing salve: "Art is a life raft. Many who become artists did so because they found refuge in art." Simple musings from Mark Lombard, founder and president of For Love & Art, remind us that: "art, like chocolate, is best when shared!" From musicians to writers, these artists have a deep respect for their craft and an understanding of the power of creative expression—for themselves and the world.

Reflection

Q: How does attention to craft enhance these artists' experiences of love and forgiveness and other values?

Q: How important is artistry in conveying emotional meaning?

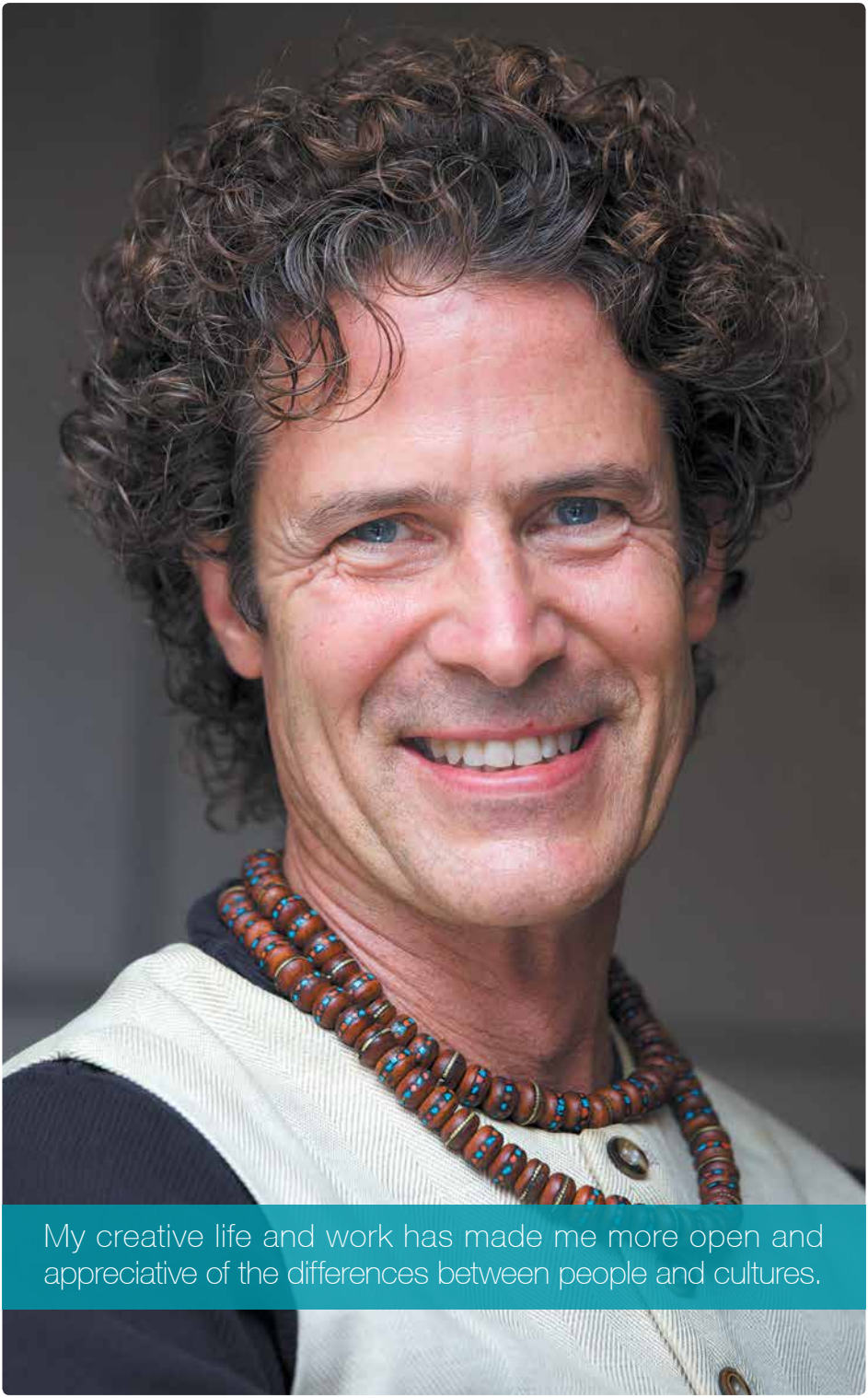
Q: Do some art forms convey emotional meaning more than others? Why?

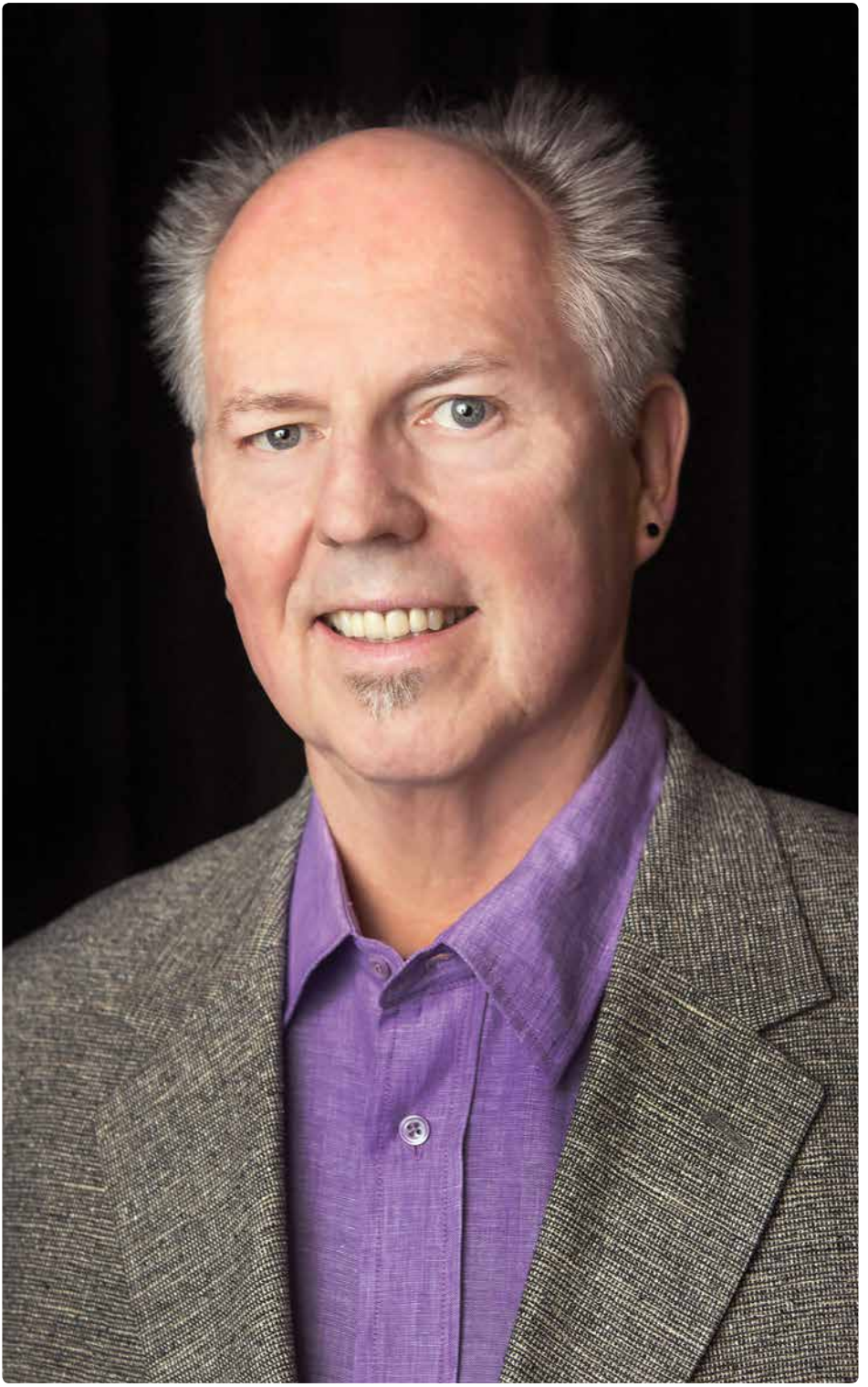
Frank Fitzpatrick | FILMMAKER, PRODUCER & SONGWRITER

Music has the unique capacity to bypass our thinking mind and alter our perceptions and emotions, whether we are aware it is happening or not. By operating on this level of consciousness and our psyche, music can shape who we think we are—our self-identity, how we see the world around us, and how we see ourselves fitting into that world. Therefore, music can help create empathy within us—the first step toward forgiveness. Music can help us melt resistance to love and deeper connections, allowing us to feel love more deeply and create stronger bonds with ourselves and others, not to mention to the divine source and creativity force that flows from that connection. We can use music to shift our emotions from anger and fear, to acceptance and love. Beyond the individual, and those direct personal relationships, we use music in combination with images and story to shift the audiences perceptions, emotions, and beliefs around an individual or an entire race or culture, transforming millions of people in a matter of minutes.

Music and art communicate the energy, intention, and message placed into them by the creators. It is the role and obligation of the creator to decide what they want the audience to think and feel. If that music or art are communicating hated, apathy, anger, or violence, then they will evoke those emotions in the consciousness of society. If the creator is committed to create beauty, wellbeing, and positive transformation in the audience, they have that option and control. Naturally, you and I prefer this choice, but it is not a default property for either music or art. So I feel what is more important to realize is how music and art communicate, and for us to take responsibility for what we create and what we choose to listen to, so we can be sure it is in alignment with our higher intention. This does not mean that expressing anger through music is bad, or that we should only listen to a particular kind of music. Rather, it means we should be conscious of why we chose what we chose and what it is doing to ourselves and others.

My creative development has informed my values by making me more conscious and sensitive to the subtle energies from which ideas emerge. My creative life and work has made me more open and appreciative of the differences between people and cultures, as it is the differences that inspire new ideas. I am more committed to creativity and co-creation as a way of living, rather than simply a craft or profession. My creative life is my life. It allows me to change routine into ritual and function into beauty. As important, my values inform my creativity. I create from a deep desire to bring value into the world. That might be in the form of a message, joy, movement, inspiration, beauty, access to deeper spiritual connection, empathy building between cultures, bringing myself and others back to a state of composure during times of stress, or a number of other ways that I see I can serve through the music, and the music can serve through me.


My creative life and work has made me more open and appreciative of the differences between people and cultures.



George S. Clinton | FILM & TV COMPOSER

Art is a life raft. Many who become artists did so because they found refuge in art from some traumatic aspect of their early lives. I know I did. For me, it was about finding a safe creative space from which I could weather the stormy emotional seas of having an alcoholic father. It actually was through that creative process that I became aware of the healing aspects of it and in the end was able to forgive him and even love him for the man he was trying to be outside the disease. This has been the case for me throughout my life.

I don't remember her name, but a young blind pianist once said "music is what feelings sound like." Another quote I recall is "music is the point where the spiritual and the emotional meet." All art is a window into another point of view. When we experience art it is a communion between the artist and beholder. We get to see through their eyes, and hear through their ears. In fact, all we really have in life is our own particular and unique point of view. I wrote a small verse about it called "Blip."

My blip is all I have

My fleeting point of view.

I am over in an instant and then

Blip—so are you.

Art has the power to connect us and that creates the potential for empathy which can lead to acceptance which can lead to love and even forgiveness.

Art is a life raft. Many who become artists did so because they found refuge in art.

My creative life has given me solace, inspiration, release, insight, opportunity. I am continually transformed by it. In fact we all create our lives everyday. When you stop to think about it, our lives are just one big improvisation. Even in the routine of daily life we are improvising—our conversations, thoughts, actions, and even emotions are being "made up" as we go along. That's not to say we can't plan ahead, but even then we adapt to the moment once it comes. I guess in that regard, life is jazz—improvising through time and space while anticipating and reacting to the changes. We are all artists creating on a daily basis that art which is our lives.



Nicol Ragland | FILMMAKER & PHOTOGRAPHER

As a photographer and filmmaker, I've found stories from all regions of the world that allow me to document the art of being human and the thread of creative alliances. I've photographed victims of the Khmer Rouge of Cambodia, portraits of children with cancer from St. Jude's hospital, gay weddings, farmers in Timor Leste on the front lines of climate change, monks in Burma under the oppression of the military junta, elders of a tribe of hunter-gatherers in Tanzania explaining their marginalization, and, most recently, young artists at work in studios, streets, and stages expressing all that they are through multiple mediums… just to name a few. My most recent fine art series, "Between Two Worlds," is meant to subvert separatist thinking by reflecting back the destruction of life amongst the speed of our industrialized society.

Never have we needed our artists more than now.

The inspiration came from heartbreak. A very short but profound relationship came my way a couple of years ago and left me with a strong sense of unfinished mystery. By virtue of it being brief, I vacillated between it being perverse, painful, destructive as well as expansive, full of possibilities, and a love where you have no choice but to allow all walls to crumble. It felt primal where denying it felt like denying gravity but I had to because he had to go. It took a while but I learned that I had to accept the realm that held both emotions, a realm "between two worlds." I think of this place for us, collectively. We live in a culture that perpetuates turning a blind eye away from our fear, our grief, and destruction while in that same place is a tremendous amount of resolution, love, and truth.

Forgiveness requires vulnerability. It requires the unleashing of your own ego. It requires the ability to face the truth. It requires a small crack—like a light leak in a camera—to penetrate your walls of division leaving you no choice but to give way. This body of work requires shouldering through fear, looking wholeheartedly into the unknown, exploration, questioning doubt, confronting unexamined assumptions, facing myself, and the recognition of something larger than me and my own desires in order to offer up a possibility of meaning, and the capacity for transformation.

Sometimes I create bodies of work knowing it may suffer the weight of its own futility but, in the end, I'm required to expand my perception, to consider another story and with the intention for the viewer of my frames to consider a newer view as well. I recently read a thought by Augusten Burroughs which read, "As it happens, we human beings are able to live just fine with many holes of many shapes and sizes. And pleasure, love, compassion, and fulfilment—these things do not leak out. So we can be filled with holes and loss and wide expanses of unhealed geography—and we can also be excited by life and in love and content at the exact same moment."





This is the power of art, to portray this and to reflect back both worlds of conflict as well as absolution. Never have we needed our artists more than now. As Arendt reminds us, "for they provide the subversive narratives that allow us to chart a new course." Because of the stories I have covered and the humility they required as I dove deeper into each narrative, I'm continuously challenged to broaden my horizon and develop a larger sense of understanding.

Mark Lombard | FOUNDER & PRESIDENT OF **FOR LOVE & ART**

Throughout history, great art has been thought to have power that flows beyond mere understanding. It nourishes and sustains the spirit, some call it "food for the soul." Art often immerses the viewer in beauty, joy, and the magic of life. It so frequently elevates human beings beyond rational thought into a domain of awe and serenity that some call it the gateway to the eternal.



Pablo Picasso famously quipped, "Art washes away from the soul the dust of everyday life." Art, like chocolate, is incredibly delicious. Art, like chocolate, doesn't require you to know anything about it in order for it to taste so good. All that's required is that you actively taste it and not just passively look at it.

As a hospice volunteer, I had a wonderful patient named Miss Billie who shared my passion for art. One day, Miss Billie's legs started giving out, and specific exercises were suggested in order to restore her strength. Any reluctance she had to do so disappeared when I promised to take her to a local museum as a reward for her efforts. But try as she might, she could not surmount the toll of her years; she was not to walk again. Undaunted, I started bringing pieces of the museum to her—souvenir postcards—and I noticed her reaction when I presented these to her. Why, she was young again! How her eyes twinkled as she relished the treasure before her. In the moment, she had recaptured beauty and life with vigor!

Art, like chocolate, is best when shared!

One painting in particular made a striking impression on her. Painted from a distance, William Merritt Chase's "Idle Hours" depicts a family scene at the turn of the century enjoying a picnic in a grassy field beside a lake. Miss Billie looked at this, and pointed with her finger to the person closest to the lake and declared, "I wish I was right there, right now!" And she was! She was no longer in that nursing home in Grand Prairie, Texas, no longer in her cramped room, no longer worried about what's for lunch, or when her family would visit, or how her hair looked. She was free, liberated from the ugliness of everyday life, quietly idling away the hours with her family along a lakeside on a cool summer day.

Such is the art experience made real. One reclaims beauty, youth, freedom, and vigor, even if just for a little while. It's possible! Like chocolate, you have to taste art in order to get its magic. Clear your mind, step out of the world of judgment and opinion and what you know or don't know, and what you feel. Prepare yourself to launch into a voyage of discovery by asking, "I wonder what this painting tastes like?" There's nothing to it… just taste! Court the art experience by visiting your local museums and perhaps you will develop a passion that you didn't know you had. And take a friend. Art, like chocolate, is best when shared!

Chris Mancini | MUSICIAN & PRODUCER

What has not been said about the power and impact of art and music in our lives? We all know those rapturous feelings when finding a great song, painting, or poem. Our conscious mind merges with the heart and lets the emotional message come into focus. We feel complete with ourselves in these moments.



Art is our essence, manifested from the dust of the planets by ordinary people. For this, mankind has much to be grateful for. The simple act of creating or performing is as precious a gift as can exist. It allows us to reveal our truth, wisdom, and joy to others. Creation is a personal act of freedom.

The smallest and seemingly most insignificant of creative efforts are no less valuable to humanity than the works of the great masters. When our creative urges are acted upon, a center of giving and receiving is created. It is this gift that moves us and sometimes others to greater awareness and fulfilment. Whether you are playing to a full or empty house, the power of creation can flow and give us new views of ourselves.

It is not at all about the quality of the art created, but more about the giving and the receiving of the created gift. This is the elixir that makes moments in life unique and special. The good that creativity does in the world is immeasurable. Forever igniting the passions and dreams that move us forward in our evolution.

Art is our essence, manifested from the dust of the planets by ordinary people.

Music and the arts have always been respected as a way to communicate with our higher selves. Most of us would agree that somewhere in life, music played a vital role in changing us for the better. The psalms say that someday we will sit around a table with our enemies and make a perfect peace. Those with faith are joyous and grateful for this promise. Music and art are a call for a harmonic renewal of peace and faith. The more music and art we create, the more chances we will have to understand each other.

RebbeSoul | MUSICIAN

Music and art can be a window to the soul. Haven't we all experienced some kind of identification with a performer of a song we love? In the 1960s, every teenage girl on the planet was in love with either John, Paul, George, or Ringo. The Beatles were pop icons to be sure, but if it weren't for the power of the song, there wouldn't be enough power in the media to have made the Beatles into pop icons to begin with. I love working with the great Yemenite singer, Shlomit Levi from Israel. When she sings, I can't help but smile and feel adoration for her. Indeed, we receive messages and email all the time from fans exclaiming, "Shlomit, I love you!" Do these people even know her? How could they love her? What's really going on here?

Music has a certain power of revealing something deep and often something beautiful to all of us. I remember recording a traditional Yemenite song with Shlomit, and as we were listening to the playback in the studio, I had my hands covering my face in deep concentration so I could meticulously evaluate the performance. I noticed my eyes were tearing up and I was practically sobbing. Now, I'm about as Yemenite as a bowl of Hungarian goulash, but somehow I became attached to this other culture as if it were part of my own past by simply hearing its music sung with the purity of Shlomit's voice. It brought up emotions and created a bonding experience for me.

Artists are the prophets of modern times.

Music indeed can be a window to the soul and even beyond. Artists, musical or otherwise, when we truly connect and are completely in the moment, are channels. Artists are the prophets of modern times. The best we can do as artists is to do what we do with all honesty and be as transparent as possible so whatever lies beyond can shine through. As musicians, we practice our craft so we can easily step aside and allow this to happen. That's the best we can do. It doesn't matter how fast we can play or how high the notes are we can sing. At the end of the day, it's all about us being good enough to just get out of the way. When listeners experience real music created with selfless intention, they are getting a glimpse of love from another world. No wonder they fall in love with the singers on stage!

In the Jewish Hasidic tradition, a wordless melody called a nigun in Yiddish and Hebrew, is considered holy because it connects the heart directly with Heaven and nothing else, not even words can get in the way. This melody, a nigun, is a direct link to God and the love beyond or as Coltrane put it, "A Love Supreme." The next time you are charmed by a great song, a singer, or a beautiful guitar solo, you might really be falling for "A Love Supreme."


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Laura Cohen | DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY ARTS, **BALTIMORE CLAYWORKS**

Active hands-on making and reciprocal exchange between oneself and a medium engages and encourages us to be present, practice patience, and question how we see the world. Art challenges assumptions and reminds us of the importance of being present, seeing oneself and others through the limits and possibilities of working with material. The relationship one develops with a material like clay, for instance, parallels the relationships we have with others and self-care. Much like a friendship or personal, mental, emotional, and physical health, clay has to be nurtured, taken care of, checked on, has to dry slowly and carefully. If our wet clay is neglected, it will crack, but with careful attention, it can be reclaimed and turned into something else—the material forgives us but also holds us accountable. The physical process of making teaches us how to care, love, and forgive ourselves and others, increasing our capacity to love and forgive in so many circumstances.

The arts communicate many positive values to the world through making, viewing, and experiencing accountability, empathy, love, sincerity, respect, humility, openness, mastery, patience, justice, and so forth. Art encourages honest reflection about one's humanness and place in the world.

Art making is humbling, forgiving, and challenging. I have and continue to learn about myself and others through making.

I believe in unapologetic making—making to feel, grow, love, understand, explore, connect, reflect, and be fully human. My creative life has taken many forms—from teacher and ceramicist to performer and brewer but regardless of vehicle, it's been about transformation, connecting with others, overcoming assumptions and combating systems of oppression through genuine interaction, access, learning, and understanding.



Art making, individually or as a group, brings folks together with equal footing —we all have the same experience with a material. The material treats you the same and one has the same experience with it—whether you are a six-year old white child or a sixty-five-year old African American woman. Art making is humbling, forgiving, and challenging. I have and continue to learn about myself and others through making.

Kathy Eldon | FOUNDER OF **CREATIVE VISIONS FOUNDATION**

There's nothing more powerful than art and music to inspire the human spirit. The word "inspire" simply means to breathe in and we inhale the inspiration of art and music deep into our souls, transforming pain, grief, and sorrow into a sense of hope and possibility.



Art saved my life when I was depressed and broken after ending a marriage and leaving my home in Africa. With no friends or family around me, I had to turn inside to find new strength and courage to face an uncertain future. I had always kept journals, and sometimes doodled or drew in the margins. During this period the drawings were images of sad, floating women, seemingly unable to find steady ground to support them. As I began to explore ways of self-healing through my improvised art therapy, the drawings mirrored my progress as the women stood up, began to stride and one day, joined hands and danced. The drawings, which seemed to come from my unconscious, informed my evolution from a weightless creature to someone who would one day sprout wings and soar. This is the message of my new memoir, "In the Heart of Life," which also tells the story of how I transformed the loss of my son Dan, a young Reuters photojournalist killed in Somalia in 1993, into a movement celebrating "creative activism," the belief that we can use our creative spark to launch projects that can positively impact the world around us.

There's nothing more powerful than art and music to inspire the human spirit.

Following his death, we found seventeen journals that my son Dan left behind, bulging books jammed with photos, drawings, and artifacts reflecting his busy life. Layered like an archaeological dig, pages from the journals have been published in three books, including "The Journey is the Destination," now studied in schools and universities around the world. Every week, I receive messages from individuals who were themselves inspired to create their own journals, that, they say, helped them find new purpose in their lives. Dan always created his collages accompanied by music from his ever-present boom box, and the mood created through that music is often reflected in his art. I have found that I can choose to stay in sadness or elevate my sense of well being through music, the true key to the soul.

I recommend that all young people, artists or not, carry a notebook with them to capture their thoughts, ideas, and visions for the future. If you haven't got a notebook, then always eat at restaurants with paper table clothes that will give you lots of space to dream.

Kurt 'Kailash' Bruder | AUTHOR & MUSICIAN

When we encounter art that genuinely moves us, we are inspired to think and feel more deeply, with exceptional clarity and passion. We notice things that had escaped our attention earlier and notice them in a new light. Life is simply more vivid. Art awakens the artist in us.

In the presence of art—whatever the modality, whether musical, graphic, theatrical, or culinary—we are uplifted from the mundane, to a heightened capacity for awareness and attraction. The act of expression, with its artifacts, stimulates extraordinary feelings and responsivity. With an elevated sensitivity to the qualities of things, the art-object becomes a mirror allowing us to discover our own feelings, insights, and creativity.

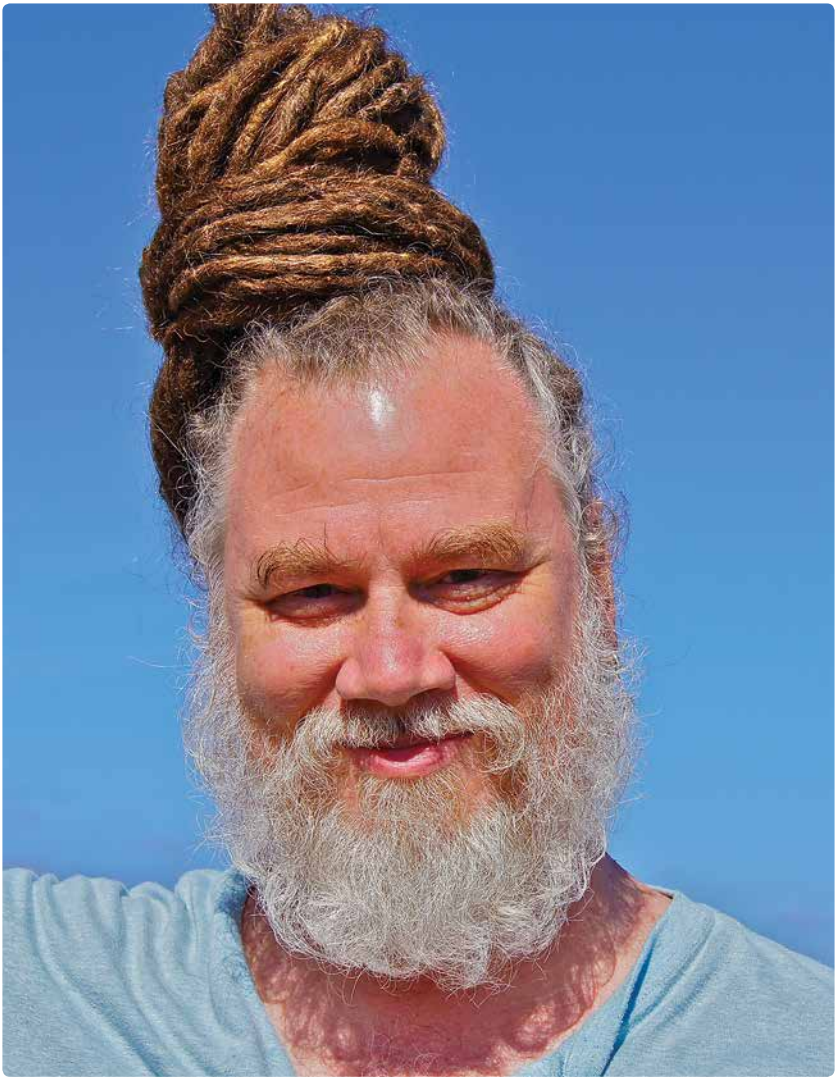
Knowing that we're on the receiving end of a wonderful gift, the result is often a profound sense of gratitude. This can be expressed as generosity of spirit, and a readiness to forgive others. Forgiveness is the restoration of care after it's been forcibly interrupted, when you have been given good cause to withdraw from someone because of their hurtful behavior. To forgive means "to give as before." Before what? Before the injury took place. And so we purge ourselves from the toxic bitterness that is injury's residue.

The Buddhist practice of cultivating "lovingkindness" (*mettă* in Pali; *maitri* in Sanskrit) proved pivotal in my own development of forgiveness. It involves repeating a series of excellent wishes. Traditionally, this text is chanted to a simple melody. As I was taught the text by a Sri Lankan Buddhist monk:

> May I be well, happy, and peaceful.
>
> May no harm, difficulties, or problems come to me.
>
> May I always meet with success.
>
> May I have the courage, patience, and understanding to meet and to solve all of the inevitable problems of my life.

In the presence of art. . . we are uplifted from the mundane.

First you repeat the text while intending these good wishes for yourself. Then you repeat it on behalf of those closest to you, followed by your friends, then acquaintances, and folks who come to mind but about whom you have no particular feeling (so-called "indifferent people"). Finally, you repeat the text on behalf of your enemies—those for whom you have hurtful feelings, whatever the cause. Use the names of the specific people in each category in place of the pronouns (I, me, my) in the text. Pay attention to the feelings that arise as you work through the layers of relationship; simply note how you feel without judgment, then move on. Always conclude the practice by returning to yourself, repeating the text as written.



Through this practice, you complete a circuit of care in which you extend the same good wishes to others that you intend for yourself. At first, saying these things on behalf of others may feel awkward, even insincere, especially for the difficult people in your life. But with dedicated practice, you will observe changes in your feelings toward those whom you remember in this way. The core concern in every wisdom tradition is to directly realize the ultimacy of love. Love is acting in a manner consistent with the fact of our interdependence. We all care for ourselves. When we love another, we have forgotten our supposed separation. We're no longer defending ourselves against the other, but treating them as part of ourselves. Art inspires us to recognize this connectedness.

H. Leslie Adams | COMPOSER, EDUCATOR & PIANIST

Nonverbal communication has the capacity to touch tender emotions in ways that are quite unique. By listening to fine music, reading great literature, savoring lofty artworks, one experiences a sense of love and peace.

I value art greatly, as it has helped to shape my character in ways which are both loving and forgiving. For this I'm forever grateful.

When one has the advantage of a fine music education curriculum in the public and private schools as a youngster, one has a great advantage of experiencing love and forgiveness in the formative years. When this is not offered, one can seek out such experience on one's own. A practical way is using the library to discover books, recordings, and videos to expand one's artistic capacity. Of course, it's great when one's parents or guardians are supportive and encouraging. By learning to play a musical instrument or learning to sing in a group further allows one the unique experience of performing together. The experience of creating beautiful music that makes listeners happy, inspired, and elated has a loving effect on the performer. By focusing on that which is loving can itself result in enhancing one's own capacity to love and to forgive.

All of the above qualities have played an invaluable part of my personal life. I studied a musical instrument through private lessons early on, then attended fine concerts, visited art museums, and went to great theater. This continued throughout my adult life, and I feel most fortunate for this. My emotions are pretty much kept at an even keel, not going too high or too low, and I tend to look for the most positive sides of any situation. I value art greatly, as it has helped to shape my character in ways which are both loving and forgiving. For this I'm forever grateful.



David Clavijo | COMPOSER & GUITARIST

Albrecht Dürer, 15th Century German painter, printmaker, and theorist, once said: "Truly, art is embedded in nature; he who can extract it, has it." Human beings conceive art as a form of expression, mostly with an aesthetic function; it is said that art is the "sensitive expression of beauty" which tries to produce an emotional response from the beholder. If we take these two ideas as a starting point, we can conclude that everything that comes from nature cannot be more than the result of balance, beauty, and a feeling of deep love for all that surrounds us.



How many times have we listened to a song or a piece of music when we are in an irascible state and, instantly, we hear the first notes and are overcome with an uneasiness and a discomfort that invite us to be at peace with those around us? That is why we can affirm that art has the gift of flourishing our most positive nature and leading us to forgiveness and happiness within our own being. Every time I sit down to compose music, whether it be instrumental or not, the topic that inspires me most is love, followed by a desire to create a consciousness that fights for and ensures a better world in which nature and human beings always go hand in hand. Music, as a kind of art, helps establishing a sense of relief, love, and struggle to find our purest nature.

Art has the gift of empathy, and it comes from the depths of the heart and feelings.

When I am at peace with myself and those around me, music is born easily and beautifully and listeners perceive this too. However, when my mind is full of negative thoughts, the music in me is not able to flow with purity and I find composition difficult, almost impossible. So I think a peaceful and balanced mind is the best tool to create art. Art has the gift of empathy, and it comes from the depths of the heart and feelings. Whoever is able to create or feel art is able to empathise with the purest feelings of a human being; feelings which are born from their own nature.

Human nature is that of love. I mean, who else would be able to discuss what love is—the true feeling that moves the world? Art expresses this feeling, brings it closer to the men and women all over the world, and is able to generate in each expression a lesson of love and passion. Rarely do we find works of art that attempt to express an opposite feeling. For me nature is love, love is art, and art is the human being.

Navasha Daya | ARTIST & VOCALIST

I perceive music as vibration filtered through an instrument of God's many creations that create sound. The wind blows, the water streams, and the crickets sing. The combination of sounds can bring upon a shift in consciousness in humans, which can bring us into balance. Since we are made up of the elements it can provide a space of remembrance and a break from the rat race in human society.

The personal development of the artist is just as important as the artistic development.

As with vocal and instrumental music, the vibration is filtered through the vocal chords or physical instruments. The quality and vibration is influenced by the skill and consciousness of the personality of the musician. The intention, mood, and lyrics can provide a platform of influence to the listener's heart. The mood of love and forgiveness can be one of many emotions experienced. There is an art to this. Especially when the musician knows the metaphysical aspects of sound and how it affects the body. Even without this knowledge it can be done. The intention is VERY important.

Conveying positive values through music to the world is a choice that every artist makes. In pop culture we find many artists make art for art's sake or to just express themselves and where they are: but the guarantee of positive values conveyed in their music depends on the artist's personal development and understanding of life. You cannot give what you do not have; and I always teach and share that "the personal development of the artist is just as important as the artistic development." Music can affect the mood of the listener—from feeling peaceful, excited, inspired, or feelings of conjugal love. It can be a very powerful influence on human consciousness and culture. The way we act and treat each other can shift with a song.



I am an artist and musician who writes music with the intention of inspiring different moods and results such as: freedom, change, love, forgiveness, and gentle character to name a few. "Iwapele," a song I wrote on my most recent EP "Rebirthed Above Ground," conveys a message of the importance of being kind based upon one of many values of the West African Yoruba people of Nigeria's cultural system.

My journey as an artist has provided me many opportunities for growth as a woman. From the guidance I receive from elders and teachers to the accountability and support of like minded artists. My intention is to grow and express all the gifts I have received. When writing a song, I spend time in the space of that topic or idea of the song—researching, building the emotion and discovering the spiritual implications and direction the message and the music convey. I feel it is an honor to be a conduit of any form of art, and I do personal development work to continue to improve and expand my consciousness and my capacity to love freely and truly.



Cyril Morin | COMPOSER, FILMMAKER & MUSICIAN

Art and music are both an "act of giving" linked with generosity, love, and forgiveness. You can only forgive when you are able to give something. This gift that we get from some artists, can be conscious, but most of the time it is unconscious. This helps to explain why you can have differences between the art and the person who gives art, the artist. To me, "giving art" is an unconscious process, and to "forgive" is an inner way to be conscious.

The "act of giving" provides communication between us. A massive part of the audience who are not artists, participate the same way by communicating with the artists, and sharing art with other people. This is why art has a common value; it doesn't belong to anyone but the universe. Artists are just translators for this common value.

When I started to compose music, it was an answer to myself, an urgent feeling like "this has to get out of me." When I started to share my film music with others on a larger scale, I discovered that I was a part of something bigger. I discovered that my unconscious mind was doing the first step, and then my conscious mind was doing the next step for the technical work, putting things together to "materialize" the score.



I've experienced this for a long time, positively changing my values. My travels have also impacted my values. Meeting new people and experiencing new cultures and civilizations have all changed my perspective. I would say that art on its own is not enough; you need to share it with others.

Art has a common value; it doesn't belong to anyone but the universe.

Jacqueline E. Perry | AUTHOR & WRITER

Art influences our mind, creating all types of emotions. For me, music creates a positive vibe. I use music in worship, in relaxation, exercising, to provoke energy, and much more. Music is indeed a universal language that speaks to individuals in various ways. Music allows us to become more in sync with our feelings. Music triggers memories that make us smile and puts us in a happy place. Music brings people closer together. For example, one day I was sitting with a group of friends and we were listening to music of the 1990s. Reminiscing of the "good old days" created conversations of school days, fun times, and a whole lot more.



Music can be very powerful. I truly believe that you can be in a room with your worst enemy and while the music is playing, both parties will forget about what the dispute is all about. I've seen it with my own eyes—such as those who hold a prejudice toward people because of their skin color, ethnic background, or financial status. As a "creative soul," writing has been my number one source of therapy, motivation, learning, and growing. Through writing, I understand myself better. It allows me to create thought-provoking scenarios causing me to seriously evaluate my past life experiences, current situations, and possible preventions of future mistakes.

Art definitely saved my life. It is an escape from all of life's trials.

Growing up as a shy girl, writing helped me develop my thoughts and get my point across when speaking verbally was too hard for me. Although I missed out on a number of great opportunities, writing has opened doors for me. One major opportunity so far was the publishing of my first book on forgiveness called "I Forgive You." As a young adult, I made many mistakes and in my book, I talk about the power of forgiveness.

Our past should not define who we are. Life is about learning and moving forward. People tend to judge you based on your past, forgetting about how you are right now. It's easy to do so and sometimes the past comes back to haunt us. Time allows us to heal, and because of that, I can more easily forgive those who have hurt me. There is no magical formula for dealing with forgiveness; but with prayer and faith in God, and finding that right source of art that puts you in a place of peace and tranquility, can all help you toward your goal of spreading positivity.

The younger generation tends to respond better to various forms of art. It can be therapeutic for many. Many people may experience stages in their lives when communication can be difficult, and we feel as though others cannot comprehend what they are going through. Art is expression; it is that simple. Art definitely saved my life. It is an escape from all of life's trials, giving an opportunity to deal with pain, and establish how to move forward.

Michael Stillwater | AUTHOR & SONGWRITER

When art touches the heart in a way which generates feelings of any kind, the artist themselves has a sense of validation of having transmitted or awakened a feeling in someone else. When the intention and energy which motivates the artist derives from their own experience of love and forgiveness, the possibility for similar feelings to arise in the viewer or listener exponentially increases.

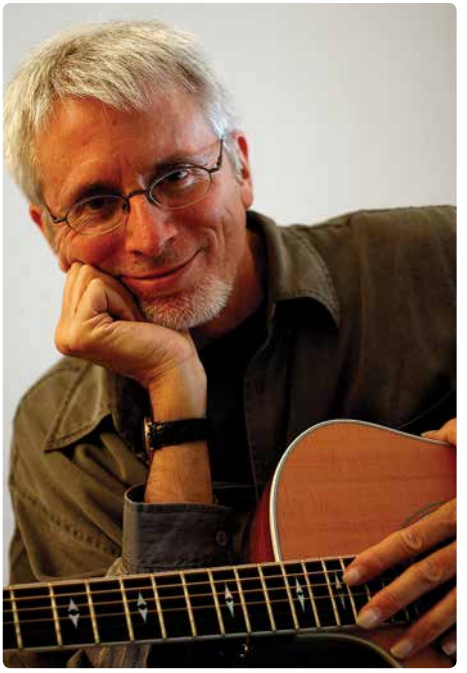
Art forms a bridge between the soul of the artist and the soul of the "witness," the one who perceives the art. The act of creation itself, whatever the content, is an affirmation of the artist's freedom to create, a confirmation of their connection to an inner source of creativity. This inward connection is the original positive experience.

When art touches us in a deep way, our feelings, ideas, beliefs, and perspectives can change in an instant.

A variety of responses are generated from any art-form, and from any specific artist. When art touches us in a deep way, our feelings, ideas, beliefs, and perspectives can change in an instant. This is why art and music are one of the most powerful forces for change on the planet.

This reminds me how often my values have effected my art. Music, visual art, and now filmmaking, provide a platform for exploring and expressing my values —what I think of as my spiritual life. Here are some examples of this process in action:





While in high school, singing a cover song in a local coffee house I realized that the lyrics were not aligned with my own story—thus leading me to focus on creating original songs. Later that year, I spent a week at a yoga community in Northern California. Seeing a living example of spiritual life all around me, I wondered what held me back from moving into their community. Another student, also a musician, said, "You know, Michael, music has always been a spiritual path." These words reminded me it wasn't necessary to step into someone else's idea of how to live, but to let the music and creativity in me be the guide, leading me on my way.

Years later, my father's death coincided with a realization of the power of music in supporting people nearing their exit from this world. This in turn led to bringing the art of intuitive songwriting into hospice, providing original songs for the dying person and their family. Later, this same impulse led to creating Graceful Passages, a spoken word and music project which became a leading audio resource in reducing anxiety at the end of life.

My own joy in spontaneous song-making led to sharing this possibility for others, forming the basis for workshops which have helped thousands of people, many with creative blocks since childhood, reconnect effortlessly to their own musical essence. Currently this program, called SongSourcing, is in development for young people to express their feelings in spontaneous song.

My intuitive sense about a universal creative pulse in everyone led to producing the film series, "In Search of The Great Song," interviewing people around the world about their connection to this pulse, and their unique expression of it. The first feature-length film in the series, "Shining Night," about a composer whose inspiration comes from nature, has found resonance in many, receiving awards in film festivals across America and premieres worldwide.

I believe what brings us joy, or what makes us feel most alive, is what invariably becomes the fertile field from which our creative expressions grow. Where these expressions take us is without limits. Staying true to our own medicine, our own essence, results in a signature of authenticity—whatever form our artistic expression may take.



Harold W. Becker | FOUNDER & PRESIDENT OF
THE LOVE FOUNDATION, INC.

We are all amazing, creative beings with limitless potential and vivid imaginations. Yet only through opening our hearts do we allow our talent to truly blossom and realize our innate, universal artistic gifts. I have come to know this personally in my own evolving journey. Over the years as I have explored my own inner nature and the value of cultivating a loving perspective, I have also embraced my creative essence. The more I express my creative self, I find my experience of life becoming increasingly more vibrant and alive.

Socially and culturally we often ignore our creative nature and instead rely on our logical and rational aspects to direct our routine lives. We frequently allow others to influence us with their perspectives too. This leads to suppressing, ignoring, or even abandoning our earliest creative intuitive connections. In our efforts to participate in a rather regimented and linear world, we cease to nurture our imaginative spirit. The more we disconnect ourselves from this core center, the greater our difficulties, challenges and our ability to flourish—individually and collectively.

Life itself is creation that expresses itself through the art of unconditional love.

Creativity is the foundation of our lives. We easily restore our connection by first accepting ourselves unconditionally. We have innumerable talents and abilities, and they can find expression in many unexpected ways. For me, I have found writing to be one way I now express myself creatively. Writing was never a strong interest and I never seemed to excel at it in school either. However, as my inner exploration nudged me in numerous ways, I allowed myself the "possibility" that I could write and convey my thoughts. I am glad I listened to my heart; these days between several published books, essays, and inspirational messages, I reach a worldwide audience with my written words.

It was the act of forgiving myself, my past, the people, places, and experiences that influenced my life, both positively and negatively, that ignited the spark of my creative awareness. Allowing love to permeate my conscious approach to life also brought a renewed confidence and willingness to try different ways to express myself. It quickly became obvious that even our every day routines have a creative component, albeit limited in scope and expression. My newfound insights encouraged me to redefine the concept of creativity and my relationship with it. Life itself is creation that expresses itself through the art of unconditional love.

Embracing our creative essence allows us to imagine new possibilities, and when we add the key ingredient of love, we paint our canvas of life with our own colors. In this way, we touch the lives of others, reminding them of their boundless potential. Allow yourself to express the unique gifts you came here to share and the world will come to know your life as a masterpiece.

Sule Greg Wilson | AUTHOR, DANCER & TEACHER

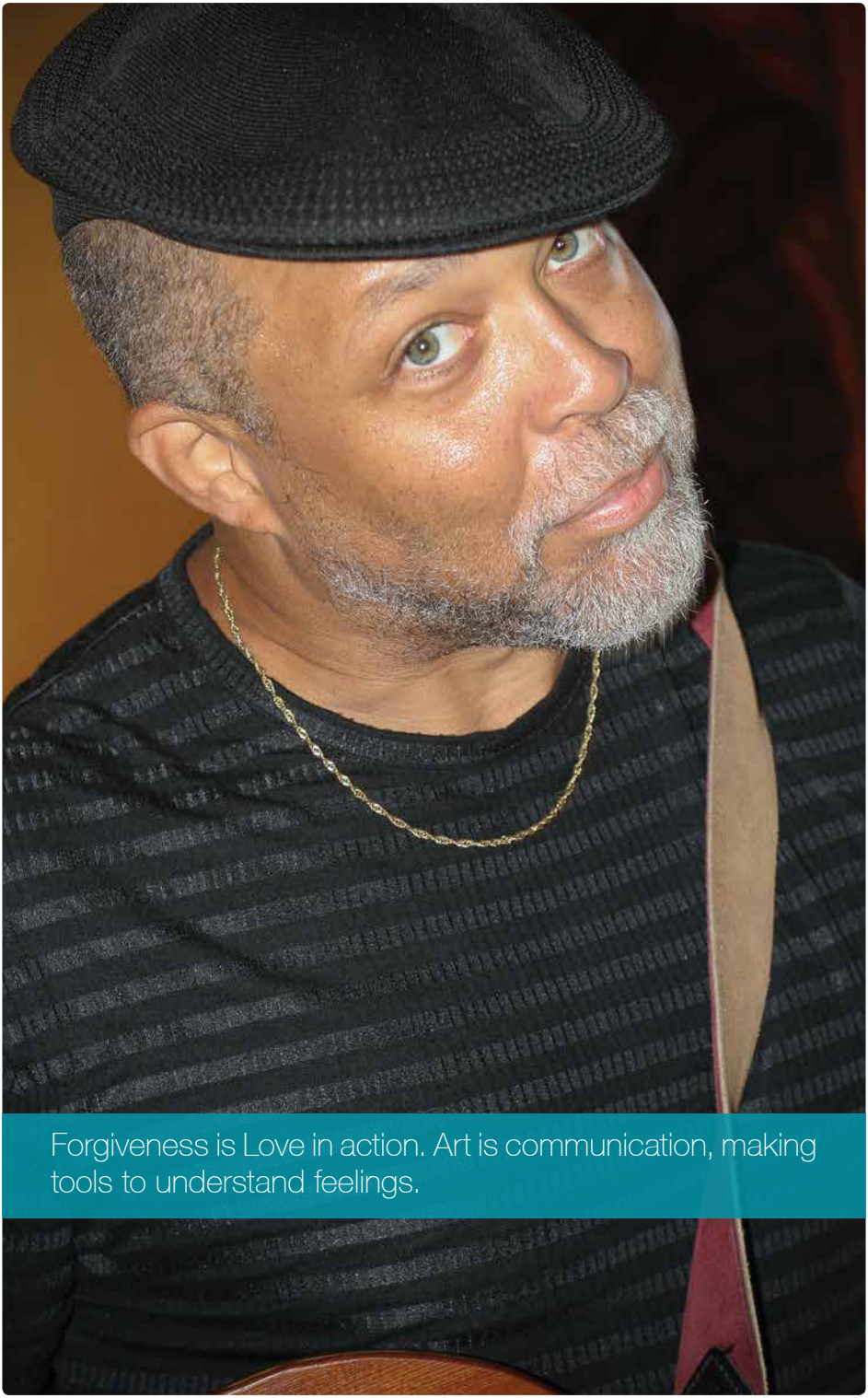




The only way to get good at one's art is to do it over and over again. All that repetition calls for one to actually be in love with the process—not the result, the process. When in the midst of a serious session —either practicing or playing, or dancing, with others, the top of my head, actually it feels like the corpus callosum, is tingling. That means, to me, that my physical, emotional, and energetic are harmonizing together; ain't that love? Also, for me, I've had to learn to forgive my own mistakes: I didn't play that run right; I didn't do that step cleanly; that line was not a perfect curve. I've learned to let that go. At some point in the production of art, it's time to let it just be. Jim Robeson, the recording engineer on my first CD, "The Drummer's Path," taught me that. At some point, the creation must stand on its own. It will never be perfect —it's human-made, and that goes for ourselves and our children, too.

By the same token, the determination to create art demonstrates our striving for perfection, for always being better—if only better at sharing and expressing whatever is driving us; that can be a "good" or "bad" thing. If one is an artist, one is, by my definition, optimistic, for the artist believes they can actually communicate something in our intangible world.

Forgiveness is Love in action. Art is communication, making tools to understand feelings. Understanding and accepting the feelings of another, and compassion towards them is Love. It is very, very simple. I have been infused by all my teachers and mentors, all those whose patience, love, perseverance, and wisdom allowed them to become masters and strivers in their arts. They are living masterpieces themselves. With head down and hands open—and sometimes with a very hard head, I have received that from them, couched in the vehicle of their art. To learn from someone—even oneself—one must be humble, willing, and strong.



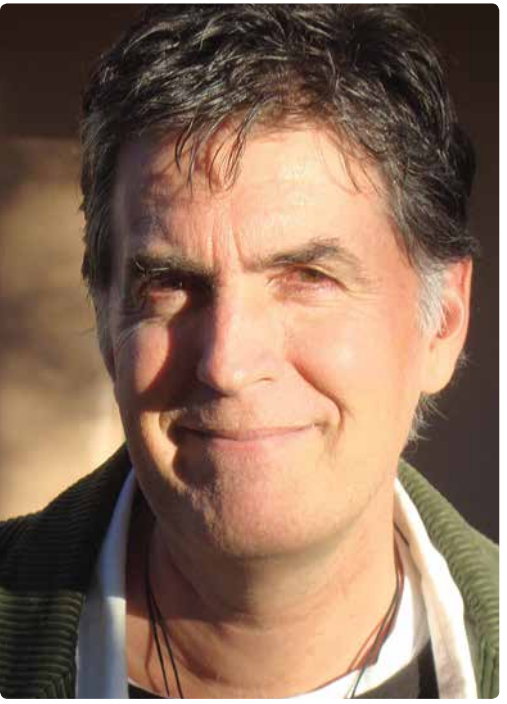
Forgiveness is Love in action. Art is communication, making tools to understand feelings.

Stephen Linsteadt | AUTHOR, PAINTER & POET

Our society tends to place more value on what we think than what we feel. As a consequence, our self-worth becomes measured by our college degree, professional credentials, how much money we make, and how many possessions we can accumulate. If one is a creative person, it is easy to apply the same measure to our art by believing our creative success depends on how much money we earn from it.

To fully engage in the creative process requires a complete surrender from thinking about it. One's muse finds you in the space that lies between judging and criticizing ourselves based on self-imposed standards. Creativity is a connection to the heart, which has a separate language from our mind's thinking and judging. My most successful paintings have always come from that special inner space. It is a space some call the frontier of the spiritual. I think of it in spiritual terms because it is the place where the heart resides as a portal to the source of love, forgiveness, and compassion. If we can truly create from that place, I believe everything else in our outer life takes care of itself.

. . . the place where the heart resides as a portal to the source of love, forgiveness, and compassion.



When we connect to heart-consciousness we tap into the wellspring of love. When the spirit of love flows through us unimpeded by repressed emotions and negative thinking, we are a channel for spirit to manifest in the world. As a channel for the spirit of love, the art we create becomes a monument to spirit, standing as a metaphor to what is true and whole within our authentic self.

Many of my paintings are inspired by the feminine spirit, which serves as a metaphor for heart-consciousness and our connection to our higher soul self. Their figures are often seen trapped behind an invisible barrier which separates our outer physical world from the divine. The feminine speaks to us about what lies beneath the surface of our perceived vulnerability and self-judging. These figures represent an appeal from behind the veil of our senses to go beyond words and to seek positive and love-motivated action within the world.

Shambhu | COMPOSER & GUITARIST

From my childhood, I have lost myself in the wonderment of sound and music. I discovered early on that I was blessed with musical ability, and by my teens I was playing music professionally. At age twenty-one, my life intersected with a renowned spiritual teacher, Sri Chinmoy, who encouraged me to elevate my own music from a commercial to a spiritual dimension. As my meditation practice focused on feeling and sharing qualities like love, forgiveness, compassion, and joy—qualities which Sri Chinmoy showered on me—I sought to evolve my music as an expression of that inner dimension. Prior to performing, I would meditate on love, gratitude, or compassion, and as I walked onto the stage, I tried to consciously flow those qualities as I let go to the music.

I remember performing in Victoria, Canada, eyes closed and lost in meditation, and there was a moment when I opened my eyes and peered out at the two-hundred people in the audience. I saw many eyes closed, listeners lost in the musical bliss flowing from my guitar to their hearts. That night it occurred to me that music can be a platform for the expression of love. That personal realization was a marker in my life. Years later, it sparked a renewal of my own musical career.

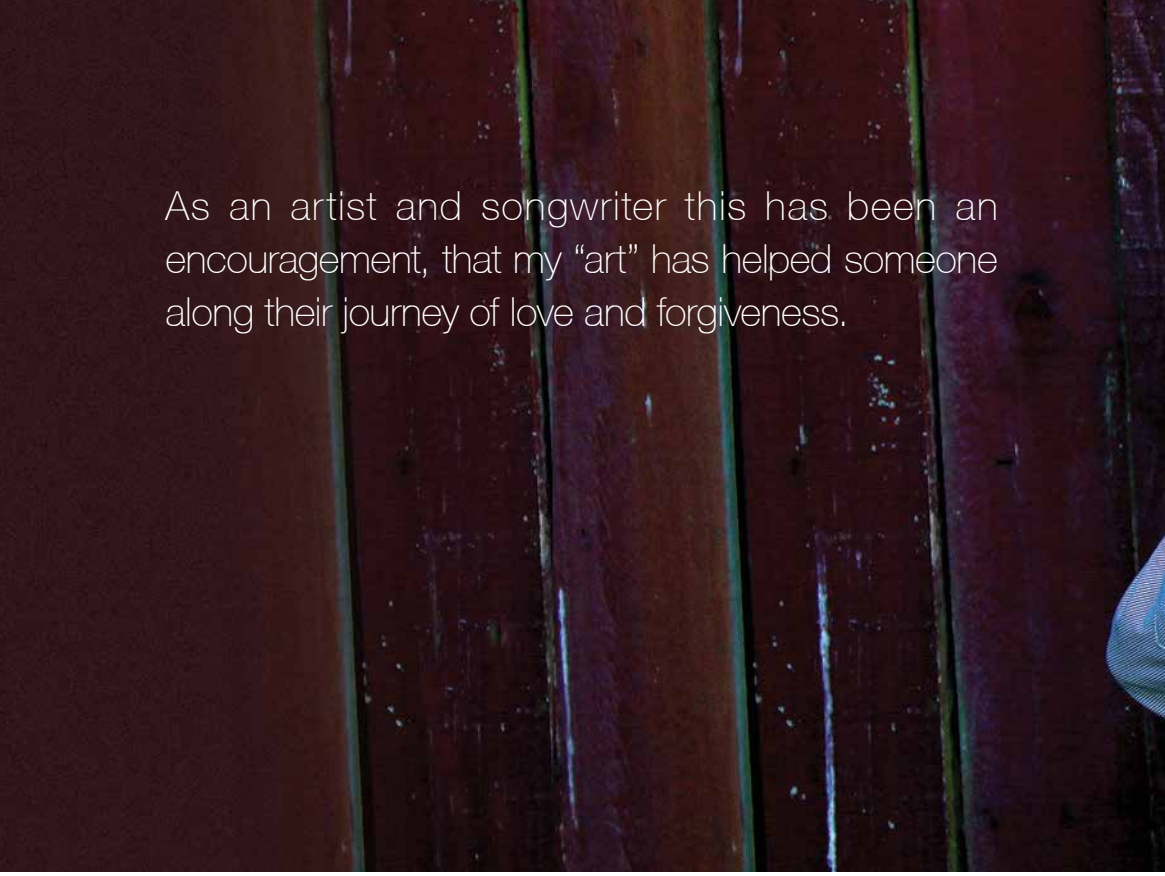
My first CD, "Sacred Love," was dedicated to the quintessence of love. My new CD, "Dreaming of Now," expands on that expression. UK reviewer Steve Sheppard wrote on his OneWorldMusic blog: "Shambhu's brand new album permeates a radiance so powerful it lightens the very soul." Serge Kozlovsky added in his Ascentor review, "During the feelings of calm and relaxation this album will bring you, imagine anything you like; this album—filled with light, love and warmth of heartfelt feelings—will help you."

My spiritual teacher Sri Chinmoy wrote, "Music is the language of God. It is a language of love." If creativity is a blessed gift, then using creativity for love is a greater one. Being a conscious channel for inspirational music can elevate musicians like myself to a new awareness of love and forgiveness and sense of purpose.

The miracle of music is this: it will inspire forever. I will someday leave this earthly stage, but my music—and the soulfulness that inspired it—will survive long after I am gone. As we musicians travel the path of life, if we come to a point in our life where being in service to love and forgiveness transcends all other reasons for creating music, then that's the time to radiate the Light we already are.



It occurred to me that music can be a platform for the expression of love.



Jules Riding | SINGER-SONGWRITER

Art can’t transform our capacity to love and forgive, but Jesus can. Art can help get the message of Jesus’ sacrificial love out from the pages of the Bible to the seeking heart of humanity. Art can present a familiar message in a new light so that crusty ears can re-hear something that prejudice has blocked out for many years. Let’s face it, the message of Jesus dying on a cross has been told and re-told for many centuries, but people in every generation need fresh ways of hearing a well-told story. The responsibility of the Christian artist is to speak the Gospel message in a fresh, attention-grabbing, relevant, and life-changing way.

I recently spent six months travelling around Europe, and visited many dozens of churches across nine nations. Some of these churches were incredibly ornate, with complex structures built in a time before cranes had even been invented. Some of these churches were awe-inspiring spaces to visit. Many had wonderful works of art, including paintings, windows, and sculptures depicting Biblical scenes. I could only wonder at the level of commitment and expertise that allowed this to happen so many years ago. It made me think of the art of this day, including modern painting, sculpture, music, drama, and film to convey the same Biblical message but in a fresh way. The challenge to



the artist is to have a profound message, the love and forgiveness of Jesus, and convey it in a way that is intelligent, articulate, profound, moving, touching, challenging, confronting, and ultimately authentic. It takes courage for this to happen as so often the artist is compromised by the need to pay rent or buy food, the assumption being that an uncompromising artist may have to produce work that is sometimes unpopular or unsaleable to be authentic.

I struggle to find direct and practical examples of art that have impacted me in this way. All that springs to mind is my own song "Forgive Me" from the "Cataclysm" album. This song is an expression of the pain I felt as a teenager at suffering the abuse of being bullied at High School. This experience traumatised my self-esteem to such an extent I wanted to take my own life. Learning to forgive my abusers has been a long and difficult journey. Writing the song and performing it in public has been cathartic for me. It has helped me express and come to terms with the pain from that part of my life. Many have written to me saying the song has helped them gain a deeper understanding of forgiveness. As an artist and songwriter this has been an encouragement, that my art has helped someone along their journey of love and forgiveness.

Robert Meagher | FOUNDER & SPIRITUAL DIRECTOR OF **SPIRITUAL GUIDANCE**

Artistic expression—whether through painting, sculpture, music, writing, poetry, live theatre, or any other outlet—can offer us a divine window on love and forgiveness. Artistic expression can equally transform our capacity to love and forgive by giving us a medium and outlet to express that love and forgiveness.



For example, Robert McDowell writes passionately about poetry as a spiritual practice in his book "Poetry as Spiritual Practice: Reading, Writing, and Using Poetry in Your Daily Rituals, Aspirations, and Intentions." McDowell eloquently portrays how reading or writing poetry requires the person to be in the present moment with focused vision that is meditative in nature. It is through this heightened awareness that love and forgiveness are given birth and usher us toward greater peace in our lives. "Poetry as spiritual practice leads to stillness, the calm centre where you are most open and alive. Poetry itself makes you more mindful, and as you become so, you gracefully reconnect with the natural world."

Art can show us how to be kind, gentle, peaceful, joyful, generous, and how to have faith and hope.

Think about the last time you were enthralled with a play, poem, song, or work of art. The very nature of artistic expression can provide a peaceful conduit to demonstrate and act out our love and forgiveness. One beautiful example is Jean Léon Gérôme's exquisite painting "Pygmalion and Galatea." Gérôme's masterpiece portrays a master sculpture passionately embracing his subject as she comes to life from the ivory slab he has so lovingly molded into a beautiful woman. Just as Gérôme's painting illustrates the powerful emotions associated with love, artistic expression can soften and open our hearts to love and forgiveness. Yet love and forgiveness are not the only emotions, feelings, or experiences that artistic expression can offer us. Art can show us how to be kind, gentle, peaceful, joyful, generous, and how to have faith and hope.

I have been blessed to express my creativity, in many forms, throughout my life. As a child I drew, painted, sculpted, and performed live theatre. Today, my creative expression most often manifests through my writing, sometimes poetry. Any and all of these different mediums allow me to quiet myself, move away from the abundant distractions of the world, and turn inward to a place of peace and quiet. It is from this place of peace and quiet that love is born and forgiveness can be cultivated.

Artistic expression provides all of us with a wonderful opportunity to transform our capacity to love and forgive. We are equally given the opportunity, through our artistic expression, to communicate positive values to the world. Give it a try! See for yourself. Allow your creativity to blossom. Let your creativity come forth and bless the world and everyone in it.

Kavita Parmar | CREATIVE DIRECTOR

Art and Music for me have always been the most instinctive form for understanding the world we live in. Throughout my life in moments of happiness and sadness, the one thing that works without any doubt as the perfect balm or the glorious enhancer, is art and music.



No translation is required and each one experiences it in the most personal way and yet connects with others who are going through the same process with them at that moment. It makes us remove our barriers much easier than any well presented argument or debate. So without doubt art and music can enhance the instinctive capacity we all have as humans to love and forgive.

One of most important values that art and music communicate is the joy of creation even through mourning or loss. It is a therapeutic process for the creator. Also to capture the pain or distress and turn it into an expression of beauty that moves the souls of those who have not felt it first hand, shows how art is a great tool for empathy.

The creative process has taught me humility and love. Humility, to accept and understand how frustrating and difficult it can be at times even after years of experience. Love, as it intensifies my relationship with what I do. The creative process is full of failures, and success is but a happy accident that one never truly understands. So if one does not truly love what they do, they would give up, and not blindly insist even when they are unsure of the outcome. The creative process has made me grateful to be able to be so passionate about something that just the act of doing it makes me happy. It has without a doubt enhanced my ability to be empathetic to the people and the condition of the world around me. It has fired me to be idealistic enough to believe that I can help create a solution to make things better.

The creative process has taught me humility and love.

Ultra Naté | SINGER-SONGWRITER, DJ & PRODUCER

Art and music can foster a spiritual awakening in oneself. It can teach you how to be open to giving and receiving love. I remember clearly listening intently as a child, and later as a teenager, to the finer nuances in the "feel" of a record and how it spoke to me on an emotional level. Those are the references I drew from later as I became a songwriter and recording artist with no formal training in the art of singing or songwriting. It was a matter of instinct in how to convey love to my audience, and that what you sing you must live by, it's your truth.

Art communicates the positive values of freedom, expression, and connectivity to others. Yet, art is relative, and it depends on what the artist is submitting in the work. Just as there are positive values there are negatives as such is the yin and yang of life.

I have learned to always be a student of life and its many surprises. I'm open to the constant movements and shifts of life and love. I've learned through my art and music that nothing is stagnant and everything is constantly in motion. Having a creative life allows one to experiment and gives license to how you view the world, and how you wish to be viewed. Art gives voice to who you are. Although, personally I don't think I've ever undergone a huge shift or transformation in values because my belief system has remained the same. I have spoken to many who have said certain songs of mine have changed their lives. They found themselves or were empowered in some magnificent way.

Art and music can foster a spiritual awakening at times in oneself. It can teach you how to be open to giving and receiving love.



Application

Q: What are your creative talents? In what ways can they be further activated?

Q: What artistic expressions resonate with you and increase emotional engagement in others?

Q: How would you communicate love and forgiveness through your art?



Love & Forgiveness


LOVE
LIVE
FORGIVE

Love continues to be one of the most common themes in the creative arts, especially in movies, music, and writing. There are probably more love songs in the world than any other theme. Although love may refer to an action, a feeling, or a state-of-mind, it often refers to a strong emotional attraction or personal attachment. Love is also a virtue that represents affection, compassion, and kindness to others. Love may be difficult to singularly define, but it consistently captures our imagination. Art and music inspired by love can open the doors of our heart, inspiring us to experience love in all its complexity.

Forgiveness is for giving. We give to ourselves and others through forgiveness —an intentional and voluntary process that helps us change our attitudes and feelings toward an offense in our personal life. Forgiveness gives us permission to let go of negative emotions such as hate and revenge or shame and guilt and increase our ability to share positive thoughts and feelings towards ourself and others. Artists themselves speak to the forgiving or unforgiving quality of the medium they work with, and are often engaged in creative pursuits to "let go" of a feeling, emotion, or attitude.

The selections in this chapter explore both love and forgiveness together, exploring their distinct value to art and the power of their joined conceptualization. Singer-Songwriter Heather Frahn understands that "the more we choose to engage with forgiveness and love, the more these qualities grow." Novelist Trudie Noah Clem recognizes the powerful impact music has on her ability to forgive, "Listening to music, letting the words and rhythm, reach inside me to restore balance and reflect on reconciliation." Also, Gary Malkin relates to love as a driving life force and asks the reader to consider heartfelt answers to these life questions, "What makes your heart sing? What brings you joy? What are you passionate about? What are you inspired by? What is your life purpose? Who do you love?"

Reflection

Q: In what ways do these artists describe their art as an expression of love and forgiveness?

Q: Why are love and forgiveness often inseparable for many of the artists?

Q: Which stories resonate with you and your experience of love and forgiveness?



It isn't possible to love unless we first have or make room to receive another person's voice, personhood, or experience inside our own heart and soul.

Therese Schroeder-Sheker | COMPOSER, HARPIST & SINGER

In my experience, it isn't possible to love unless we first have or make room to receive another person's voice, personhood, or experience inside our own heart and soul. Music and all the arts teach us those receptive capacities in beautiful ways. When we stop and listen to the musical work, life or expression of another, sometimes wholly different from ourselves, we allow that difference to come inside and are made new by it. We cease being merely a user of music or a consumer of musical product. If I stop, look, enter into a painting, poem, dance, or a new kind of music that is created by someone else instead of only remaining inside my own experience, then the capacities to receive, hear, listen, love, cherish, forgive and to create are all interconnected. Each dimension aids and supports the other. Beautiful!

I recently had the opportunity to see an extraordinarily beautiful film about an extraordinarily difficult topic: war. The film showed people of radically different religious and political cultures at war with one another. Their story was set in a geography and way of life different from my own, and went back and forth between three languages! But the MUSIC of the soundtrack, which was performed with aching beauty, longing and artistry, was as powerful as the narrative the filmmaker portrayed. It was entirely possible for me to understand the message and get beyond my own language barrier if I remained present and open-hearted. Everything human-making was communicated through the power of exquisitely transmitted image and music. I needed only to be open to understand the depths of their love, fear, trouble, and glory. Here, communication wasn't language dependent, but art dependent. I might never be able to fully learn the history of that particular complicated political and religious struggle, but the music of the soundtrack and simply glorious images transmitted unforgettable worlds and values.

As a harpist, singer, composer, and concert and recording artist, I have worked for more than three decades across several continents. I am also a clinician, working with the needs of the dying. One life happens on glamorous stages or in larger-than-life cathedrals, where you play for a few thousand people at a time. The other life is lived in hospital and hospice wards, working in a one-on-one situation, almost invisibly, but most definitely audibly. You are there for and with the dying individual. No curtain calls! Whether I am playing for one or for many, both provide an opportunity to serve urgently: people, others, beauty, music. But in order to serve, I need to become inwardly empty, inwardly quiet, fully capable of intimacy and beauty in order to hear and imagine something new inside my own soul. Only then am I am able to make what is new audible and external and give it away to another. This inner gesture, open and listening, is a two way street that shapes both artistry and spirituality. For me, both feed and bless each other when kept together.

Paul Avgerinos | MUSICIAN & PRODUCER

I remember that day forty years ago as clearly as this very moment. Saddened and disheartened by my parent's divorce, I sat alone in our darkened porch with my eyes closed, drawing a horse hair bow sticky with tree rosin across the string of a bass violin, my cheekbone pressed against the neck of the instrument so that the deep resonant vibrations poured directly into my skull, my whole being vibrating with the majestic powerful perfection of sound. I had just clearly heard the voice of God in one simple pure note. I had just discovered the power of music to heal, bless, forgive, and lead us to love, our true and highest nature.



That thirteen year old boy did not know then that a lifetime career in music lay ahead but he was very sure that he had discovered something deep, profound and very significant. Pure sound vibrations directly change your mood, thoughts, and feelings, and if you listen with perfect one pointed attention, music will HEAL you. Of course, we actually heal ourselves through the magical power of God, our souls and bodies, but music guides us to ALLOW it to happen.

Music is perfectly balanced, complete, harmonious, and whole. When we are one with music, we ARE love in perfect harmony with the universe and all sentient beings. When we ARE love, perceived hurts and pains drop away as there is really nothing to forgive since we are complete and whole in the perfection of our divine nature. We look upon all of life's stories and circumstances with complete compassion and acceptance, especially our very own life stories and circumstances. So that innocent thirteen year old boy made his way out into the world. A full scholarship to a prestigious conservatory, a devastating heartbreak. World tours, Carnegie hall, terrible loneliness, and depression. Critical acclaim and career success, lost loves, more heartbreak and eventually the death of his dear parents.

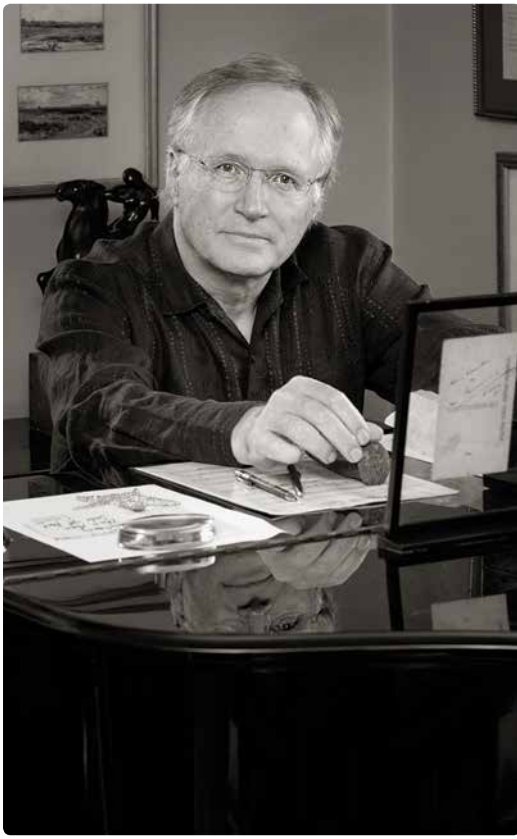
Music steadily draws me to BE LOVE, Peace, Joy, Bliss, Wisdom, and Grace.

Through it all, music steadily draws me to BE LOVE, Peace, Joy, Bliss, Wisdom, and Grace. In fact, as my life difficulties increased, my music became more purely love. Music, my constant guiding light and beacon of hope, never failing, always true, ever faithful as God is. And so dear friends, listen deeply and listen well. You too will hear the voice of God speaking directly to your heart and soul. Healing, forgiving, blessing you in all ways. I learned that life is like a wheel going round and round. Sometimes you are up and sometimes you are down. Don't get attached to the temporary circumstances of physical existence. They are fleeting and ever changing. Hold fast to the center, the heart of God which is perfect love. It will never fail you!

Michael Hoppe | COMPOSER & MUSICIAN

Love and forgiveness are two life-altering words, which music embraces in a unique way. From Pop to Classical, music stirs the heart and caresses the very essence of these words, perhaps like no other art form. My music is often called “heart” music, and I embrace this wholeheartedly. The music that I compose is really a soundtrack to my heart, whether Love or Forgiveness, or any other emotion that I might be going through.

Sometimes it is the very presence of music itself that can evoke these emotions, a kind of aesthetic chicken and egg situation, where which came first is not always clear. Placing beauty in the world is one of my own personal missions, and indeed why I am an artist. If one’s art, music in my case, can even in the slightest way, change a person’s being, or help them find a place they were unable to before, then I feel I have achieved my mission.



As for my own music, I do not question where it comes from, and I do not analyse it. My music, and I don’t really think it is mine, it comes through me, is not cerebral in any sense. Other than the melody which drives most of my music, it has to have, however, a sense of emotional logic.

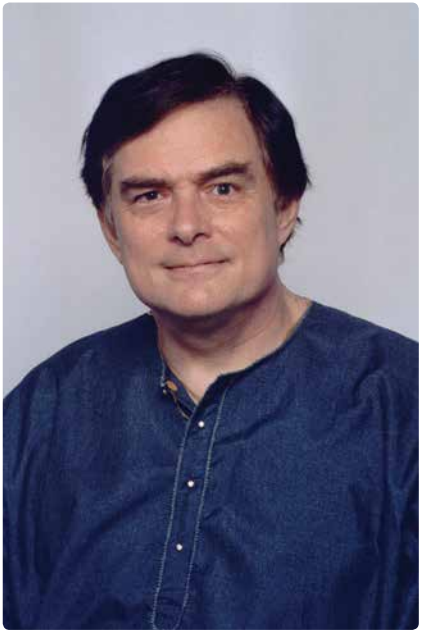
As Mozart said about melody, “the notes have to kiss one another” and I hope mine do! The challenge is to feel what I write, and write what I feel, to capture those feelings in sound, and make the music available to anybody who might like to enjoy it. Hopefully to transform the listener, and give the person a life experience. Communication of the heart is perfectly spoken by the language of music, including love and forgiveness, some of the most significant words in our lives.

Love and Forgiveness are two life-altering words which music embraces in a unique way.

Dr. Guy L. Beck | AUTHOR, LECTURER & MUSICIAN

The arts can transform our capacity to love and forgive perhaps more than anything else barring genuine love and forgiveness from those who are close to us. Listening to and understanding good music, for example, affords us the first-hand opportunity to perceive the depths of human feeling that extraordinary individuals have been able to discover through their art. As great music nourishes our souls, we are able to comprehend the superior values of love and forgiveness that others have discovered in music and were able to translate for us. Yet the discovery of great music often comes from personal pursuit and true curiosity rather than following the latest trends or considering music only as casual entertainment.

From personal experience, I found it most rewarding to seek out opportunities to listen carefully to the classics, whether Beethoven, Chopin, Brahms, Indian raga music, Sufi devotional songs, Gregorian chant, Jewish cantorial singing, the Great American Songbook, Blues, Jazz, or Irish folk songs. When something ignites a spark within, one must continue that quest to fulfilment. When you feel genuine love for the music, those feelings can be readily transformed into love and forgiveness toward people and the world at large. The positive values that art and music communicate to the world also include a deep sense of the fellowship of human beings in our quest for meaning in life.



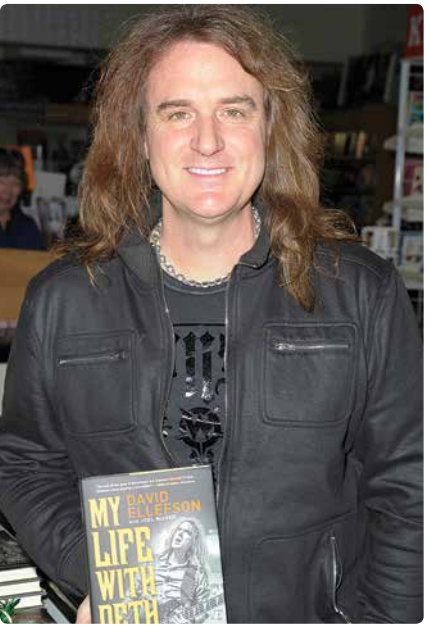
My own creative life has impacted or transformed my values in several ways. Taking an active role in creating or performing music has instilled the self-confidence to shape my existence in ways that do not passively depend on others, and to build a genuine satisfaction in life that does not come from the mere acquisition of material things or money. The spiritual value of the arts for me involves the notion that, since our Creator has the unique capacity to create this world, being creative in the arts allows us to emulate the Creator to a degree, and thus to elevate ourselves above the mundane level of nature, if only for a limited time. Thus, learning to create or perform quality music is one of the finest personal accomplishments that I have been able to pursue in my lifetime.



When you feel genuine love for the music, those feelings can be readily transformed into love and forgiveness toward people and the world at large.

David Ellefson | AUTHOR & BASSIST IN **MEGADETH**

Music is really just a reflection of what's inside of us. This is true in almost any setting or genre. For example, as I read scripture over the years there was always this debate from the Pharisees about eating "unclean" foods, as if what we put into us made us unclean. But, Christ then explains, "It's not what you put into yourselves that makes you unclean, but rather the evil that comes out of you that makes you unclean."



The same can be true with our music because it reflects what is inside of us, not the other way around. So, when we hear aggressive, angry music, that is an emotion that must come out of us either through music, exercise, literary, or through our outward actions.

I know for me, playing metal gigs is like going to the gym, it's a way to release energy. Playing and singing the songs in a high volume setting is a great way to release. I've read more than a few interviews with Hard Rock and Heavy Metal drummers where they are asked what they would be doing if they weren't in a band, to which many respond, "I'd probably be in jail." I always took this to mean that by pounding out Metal beats on a drum kit helps them get out their aggression in a constructive, rather than a destructive, way.

Further to this, I was a worship leader in church a few years back, and I found that music set the tone for the congregation to have an experience with the Spirit. It was an intentional and methodical way to move people into a time of worship to receive the Word and Sacrament. Which is why the opening songs at modern contemporary churches are usually up beat, followed by the third or fourth song as the mellower introspective songs, designed to bring the room of people into a more reflective period. Clearly, this is a period of time to receive love and be open to forgiveness.

If we write songs of hate we are letting the listener see the hate within us. Negativity is contagious because hate breeds hate. Conversely, if we write songs that are uplifting, we are encouraging the listener and that can have a positive impact on them which can spread out to many more people.

Music in major keys has an uplifting effect on our spirit, too. Especially so, the keys of G, D and C Major. Likewise, minor keys have a melancholy or darker effect on us and impact our moods accordingly.

There is a terrific book written by a Japanese author named Masaru Emoto about the effects of sound on water. Because the human body is something like 80% water, Emoto set out to see how a water crystal changes under a

microscope when various sounds and even phrases were spoken to it. Thus, if water changes due to sound, our human bodies and emotions might change due to sound, too.

According to this book, the perfect water molecule is in the shape of what we would refer to as a snowflake, and anytime loud Metal music or harsh words were spoken to the water, the crystals were distorted almost like they were offended and protecting themselves from offense. But, when happy words were spoken, and major keys of music played by speakers surrounding the water, it's crystals were almost perfect in form. As best I remember, the one spoken word that kept the water crystal in its most perfect shape was the phrase "I Love You." Presumably, this is how humans respond to each other too.

I would assume bright primary colors would have the same effect in paintings, photography or art too. This is important to note, because it explains why music has such impact on its listener. The notes that we hear have a direct correlation to our body. Likewise, the words we hear impact our soul as well.

It's as if this music tapped into my restless soul and soothed something inside of me in a way nothing else could.

It's interesting to note that the music that first got my attention as a kid was Hard Rock and then Metal music. I say this because I came from a good upbringing, but something inside of me was drawn to loud, aggressive Rock music. It's like it spoke for me in an area of my life where I felt I needed to speak but couldn't quite find my voice yet. In effect, music became my voice and my actions became my words. As I became a teenager, the music I liked became harder and louder. From KISS to AC/DC, and then Judas Priest to Motorhead. It's as if this music tapped into my restless soul and soothed something inside of me in a way nothing else could.

Today as an adult man, when I'm spiritually centered it is difficult to write words or music about chaos or confusion because those things are simply not within me at that time. However, if I'm struggling with something, stronger emotions come out through songs, words, and lyrics.

Musically speaking, just the tone of the instrument I pick up will affect the music I create. Sometimes I'll be in a happy mood and I pick up an acoustic guitar and upbeat easy songs fall out of me. Other times, I pick up an electric guitar set to a "Metal" tone, and it leads me to write those kind of songs, usually aggressive and rowdy in nature.

That's why I could never understand musical genres like Christian Death-Metal. To me, those two terms are in conflict with each other. The sensitive nature of a spiritual theme needs to have a softer musical delivery to reach the depth of the soul. Likewise, if you're singing about politics, horror, and other culturally based topics, the hard impact of Metal music is very useful.



Heather Frahn | SINGER-SONGWRITER

I can barely remember my life without music. Over the years I've been engaged with songwriting, it has become obvious that the power of music is immense and can be positive or negative depending on the spin. Most of the time, what we think is essentially what we become. What songs we listen to is no exception.

Songs can have a subconscious and conscious effect! If I am around people that constantly complain or put me down then I sure don't stick around. It's the same with music. I want songs to be like a friend and create the feeling I get when I'm with positive, loving people. I create songs with positive meaningful lyrics to share, like the giving of a gift to a friend.

Life presents everyone their share of hard knocks. Even though I choose to write positive songs, it doesn't mean I think life is all positivity and rainbows, however, what is important is how we respond to this present moment. It might take years to work out, but the more we choose to engage with forgiveness and love, the more these qualities grow.

Life's journey can throw challenges that are difficult to forgive, don't make sense, or leave you angry. One of the only things that heals this is forgiveness and love. An important distinction is that forgiveness doesn't mean 'condone or excuse', but to accept, from which point we can bring in forgiveness and love consciously and transform the negativity. Do you want to carry around baggage your whole life? Each moment is new, and all we have is the Now.

When we let go of the past and realize that it lives only in the mind and ego, then we open up the possibility for more forgiving and loving qualities, because we're not acting with unconscious limiting beliefs.

I have been inspired by forgiveness and love as an artist. I believe we must embody forgiveness and love to truly live, or we slowly die within, and our colours fade. Art reflects life, and songs are a powerful vehicle to share these broad themes. I have had feedback that my songs have helped and inspired people, even in the most challenging situations. Songs have the capacity to say so much in so little words.

The more we choose to engage with forgiveness and love, the more these qualities grow.

It's easy to say and hard to do, right? When we put love and forgiveness into a song, poem, painting or dance, somehow it's easier. We can all start with our own art-life combination, like a prayer that plants that seed of forgiveness and love, a self expression for oneself that has the capacity to inspire many towards being that change. There is something to be said for the saying "treat others the way you wish to be treated."

If we are to rise up out of the negative dream, we must start with ourselves. "Be the change you wish to see in the world," Gandhi said. Art is life, and paradoxically learning how to live life is an art in itself!



Iasos | AUTHOR & MUSICIAN

Regarding the influence of art on love & forgiveness, I'd like to focus first on forgiveness, and then love.

First, what is forgiveness?

Lack-of-forgiveness is the **act** of continuously maintaining a grudge, a gripe, a negative judgment, towards some person or thing.

Forgiveness is a non-action. It is the ***stopping*** of the sustained action of maintaining a grudge, a gripe, a negative judgment, towards some person or thing.

It takes energy to be non-forgiving.
It takes no energy to be forgiving.

Lack-of-forgiveness is hence an energy-drain, an energy-leak. Also, maintaining a negative judgment about some person or thing lowers one's vibration and releases toxins into one's body. Hence, it is also self-poisoning. So to not-forgive is to seriously injure one's self in multiple ways.

Love causes one's energy field to blossom open and raise in vibration—like flower petals opening up to receive warm sunlight.

When one forgives, they are ***ceasing*** to maintain this continuous energy-drain. They are **stopping** this continuous action of negative judgment. Hence, the energy-leak vanishes, the over-all vibration is automatically raised higher, and they cease releasing toxins into their system, from maintaining a negative judgment. So, to do the non-action of forgiveness, is very healthy for the person doing the forgiving. They become happier, healthier, and they have more energy to play with.

Art has a strong effect on **emotions**, but has very little effect on one's **beliefs**.

But since lack-of-forgiveness is an attitude caused by one's **beliefs**, and since art has very little effect on **beliefs**, art therefore has very little influence on lack-of-forgiveness.

Of course, there are exceptions: An extremely beautiful work of art or music might soften one's heart—to the point where they choose to forgive. But as a general rule, art has very little influence on lack-of-forgiveness, since art has very little effect on one's beliefs.

Love is an emotion, and since art has a POWERFUL influence on emotions, art therefore has a POWERFUL influence on Love.

The universe is really just one thing that gives the "appearance" and "illusion" of being many separate things—separated only by frequency.



Messages from Matthew stated that:

In simplest terms, Love is God's sharing of Himself with all of His creations.

Love is the universe appreciating itself.

Absolutely EVERYTHING in the universe wants to be appreciated.

And Love is this flow-of-appreciation from one part of the universe to another.

When a person views a majestic sunset, or a beautiful mountain lake, or a perfectly-pure flower, that extreme beauty tends to open that person's heart. In a similar manner, art that is extremely beautiful (to the person perceiving it) often has the effect of opening their Heart, and causing more Love to flow. Music, in particular, of all the arts, has a powerful effect on the emotions (since music is a "conductor of emotions"), and hence has a POWERFUL potential influence to open one's Heart into greater Love-flow.

The enlightened master, **Walter Russell**, said something like this:

> The farther any emotion strays away from love,
> the more that emotion poisons the body.
>
> The closer any emotion is to love,
> the more that emotion vitalizes and nourishes the body.

A related thought is expressed by members of an extraterrestrial race from Andromeda, represented by **Alex Collier**:

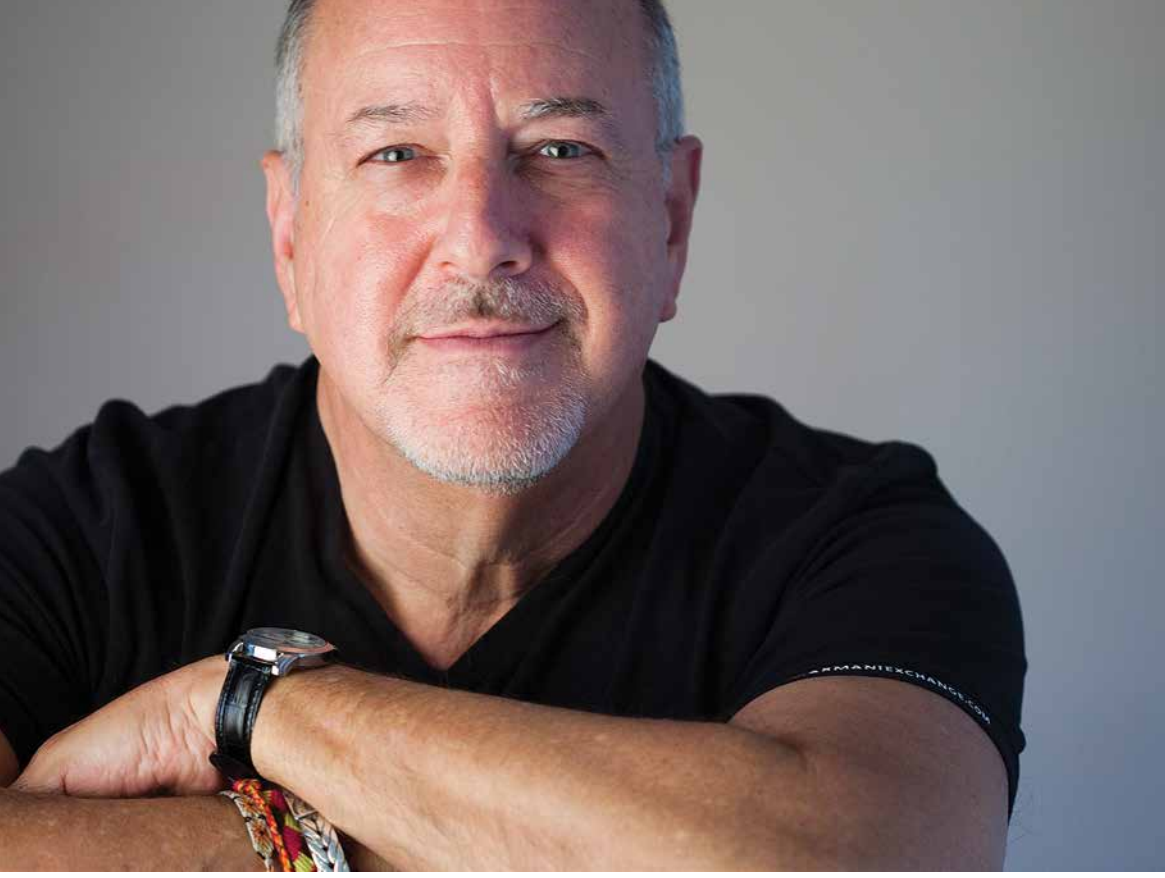
The love that you withhold is the pain that you carry—from lifetime to lifetime.

In the **Course in Miracles**, the basic tenant is:

No matter what the lesson is, the correct response is always the love-response.

In all these cases, we see that withholding love is harmful to the person, and allowing more love is very beneficial to the person. Fear causes one's energy field to contract and lower in vibration. Love causes one's energy field to blossom open and raise in vibration—like flower petals opening up to receive warm sunlight.

Hence, any art that has the effect of opening the Heart of the perceiver, has the profoundly beneficial effect of increasing the Love-flow passing through that person.



Gary Malkin | COMPOSER, PRODUCER & PUBLIC SPEAKER

Now, more than ever, we need integrating sound and music experiences to awaken the connection to our hearts and spirits, as well as to the one great heart and spirit that unifies us all. When we engage in deep listening, we can connect to the power of sound itself, which is essentially made up of the common denominator of the Universe—vibrations. When we align our awareness to the level of vibrations—especially those infused with an intention to support healing, gratefulness, and life itself—we align to the connective tissue of life that unifies us to love, because love is the vibrational frequency that the unitary field is made of. Every spiritual tradition on the planet believes in this.

While we all need to learn how to be able to work things out on the level of personality to learn about kindness, respect, and social intelligence, the bottom line is that we're only separate from one another from the perspective of the personality. What's remarkable about engaging in music is that when we start creating, making or listening to music together, it becomes obvious that we are all connected. When I engage in the experience of making or sharing music, I am connecting to the unitary field of consciousness where love is the common denominator, the vibrational frequency underlying all things.

What makes your heart sing? What brings you joy? What are you passionate about? What are you inspired by? What is your life purpose? Who do you love?

When you use life-affirming music to awaken your awareness with a loving and healing intention, you are literally aligning yourself on a molecular level with the vibrational equivalent of love. Using the power of music and sound as one of the world's most potent carriers of intention, music becomes an accelerated modality to step into the oneness of the loving universe. That's what is meant when the Bible says "In the beginning was the Word." In the beginning was the vibration. In the beginning was the Big Bang. In the beginning was that first sound and that sound is comprised of the unifying field of love.

One of the most powerful byproducts of music is the capacity to radically bring us into the present moment unlike any other art form. In these times of constant digital distractions and incessant busyness and multitasking, learning how to truly reside in the present moment could very well be the greatest gift that music can offer us today. That's why music is perhaps the most powerful integrative modality for our time.

When we tap into the full use of vibrational expression through sound, music and images, we can tune, deepen, and align ourselves as the multi-dimensional beings we are, capable of experiencing the multiple languages of the heart, body, mind, spirit, and soul, which often comes in these other 'languages' like music, poetry, and media. When this occurs, we all become blessings to one another as embodiments and articulators of love. The more we share and embody this information, we can start shifting our interests focused on entertainment, towards being focused on the world of "Inner-tainment." We've only scratched the surface of what's possible for the world of sound and music when using it to remind us how unified we are. There's no limit to how it can deliver this unifying experience as individuals or as a culture.

In order to align with this limitless experience of love, I would suggest that you step into these courageous questions: What makes your heart sing? What brings you joy? What are you passionate about? What are you inspired by? What is your life purpose? Who do you love?

When we choose our life experiences based on what brings us joy, we demonstrate that when we can draw upon that which touches, moves and inspires us, everything often moves in the direction of flow, ease, and connection. When music is part of the picture, this experience is exponentially multiplied.

Chris Spheeris | MUSICIAN, PHOTOGRAPHER & WRITER

Inspiration is my religion, my "spiritual" practice. The inspired state is my connection to the mystical realms—the mysterious dimensions of spirit and what many call God. I see inspiration as the force of nature, the force of all life, the energy of love.

What is "inspiration?" To me, it is our natural state of aliveness that always motivates us to our highest level of expression, our greatest potential in any moment. We all experience this whenever we are completely engaged in something—art, sports, adventure, hobbies, cooking, compelling conversation. Whatever completely engages us and turns off our minds from judging, criticizing, doubting, and demanding anything of the experience except for what it is, is inspired.

I see inspiration as the force of nature, the force of all life, the energy of Love.

I have written volumes on this subject, but for the sake of this article I will use a simple example that I experience daily: playing the piano. On most days, I go down to my studio, sit at my piano, and let the creative process take over. Generally I prefer to create something new, but if I am not in the mood right away, playing something that I know inspires me, can loosen me up and relax me. So begins the process of "letting go," of allowing the "flow" to come through me. Yes, "through" me. Tapping into inspiration is not a mental process, quite the opposite. It is a process of letting go, of trusting that there is a force that comes through me that always, wants to evolve with something new.

Right away, I must mention the concept of "forgiveness" as necessary in order to be fully available to create. I see "forgiveness" as a letting go of the past in order to be fully available in the present. Inspiration is ALL in the present. In fact, the state of inspiration IS the state of presence. So in order to be present and allow the force of creation to flow through me, I have to let go of my judgements, my expectations, and my limiting attitudes about myself.

Again at my piano, I must let go of any ideas of what I feel I am and am not capable of and what I want my creation to sound like. Attachment to outcome will immediately narrow or shut down the conduit through which inspiration flows. I must then trust that if I surrender my control of the creative process, something will flow through me. I have found that something always does. What I end up with is not always something that I will keep or share, but it is ALWAYS something that connects me to my next creation, and so it has as much value as those pieces that I "keep." There is no failure in the creative process. There is always curiosity, adventure, challenge, joy, and growth.

There is also love. I feel that just as I am loved into being a creator, I am also loved into being in all moments.

Where it gets really interesting is applying this process to my life. This process I described of creating at my piano is my daily practice of creating my life. Just as I forgive my judgements, my attitudes, and expectations in order to openly create, so do I forgive the same things in order to be present, and allow my life to be created in the fullest, most magical way possible. That is what inspiration does. That is what love does.



Julie Wylie | AUTHOR & MUSICIAN

Throughout the Psalms, David's consistent theme is to "sing to the Lord" to "sing praises to our God, to praise him with tambourine and dancing" (Psalm 150). As we sing and praise the Lord, we become a part of the creative spirit of God. Through the creative process of singing and dancing in praise and worship we become free to move together in synchrony, to sing in harmony as we feel the power of God's love. When we praise God we become enthusiastic, generous, joyful, lively, empowered, and compassionate as God fills us with the fruits of His Holy Spirit. The Lord delights in our praises and answers our prayers. "All things are possible. With man this is impossible, but with God All things are possible" (Matthew 19:26). Music is an intuitive, universal language of the emotions. It activates the brain and can arouse or calm stressed systems. Throughout history mankind has glorified the Lord through the Arts. We can become one with God through the creative process.



I had never written a song and although I am a musician, it was only when my husband became seriously addicted to alcohol that I turned to the Lord and He heard my cry. The drinking had taken over his life and was affecting his work, our family life, and all relationships. I remember sobbing at my first Bible study meeting and when I told the leader that I thought my husband was an alcoholic, I was unprepared for her simple statement: "Just love him." I remember seeing him sitting in the chair one evening soon after, and God helped me to see him as the wonderful man that I had married trapped in a web of addiction and despair. I prayed for answers and others joined me in praying for him to be set free. As I studied God's word, His promises became a part of me through new songs of praise that started to pour forth. I would share the songs at our Bible study and others were touched and blessed. Music activates memory, and the songs helped me to memorize wonderful sections from the Psalms, Isaiah, Proverbs, and other key scriptures that I knew were promises for my husband.

Building the bonds of love in a secure relationship lay the foundation for a positive start in life.

After twenty one years of drinking, he had a serious car accident and was miraculously unhurt. He came with me to his own church and when I was in one group, unbeknown to me, other people prayed for him and he was set free from his addiction to alcohol. He is the most special person I know. He is highly gifted and has touched many, many people. God has used him mightily for His glory. As for me, I have been given such a passion for music, children, and their families. God has inspired me to keep teaching and writing songs for children and their families. Families become inspired to sing, dance, and play together. Building the bonds of love in a secure relationship lay the foundation for a positive start in life.

Claudia Zamora | AUTHOR & SPIRITUAL LIFE COACH

Music is emotion; impulse, feeling, and sensation. Nothing is immobile; everything moves; everything vibrates. Every human being has a rhythm that is appropriate for them. It is a special condition that is a characteristic of that individual. A movement. Such is the power of this movement that causes us to see one person more beautiful than another; their "vibes" is what touches us first.



When we love someone, we love their rhythm, which essentially manifests itself through an intermediary: the heart. We then love this person's heart through its rhythm. When we love everyone, we love the rhythm in each one and we beat together in that movement. It is with our inner beat that we create the melody of our life, that which makes us dance in the wheel of constant changes. Love is the highest vibratory level that we can reach. Thanks to love we can move, relate to others, heal, and develop ourselves. Love surpasses our physical reality, and it is an unconditional soul experience that ebbs and flows throughout life. The Almighty is supreme love.

Love is the highest vibratory level that we can reach. Thanks to Love we can move, relate to others, heal, and develop ourselves.

The vibration of love has the power to create, motivate, inspire, heal, and fill us with dynamism. It has the rhythm of the soul where there are no boundaries, no separation of any kind. When we vibrate into the power of love, we become one with the whole existence. We play the music of the heart, and that song integrates our humanity.

Connecting my thoughts to the movement of music has greatly empowered the awareness of my inner self; zooming into the depths of consciousness and understanding the undertones of my own perception. It makes me happy, as an author, to be able to communicate these vibes through my creative work and to help another with their spiritual journey.



Fiona Joy Hawkins | COMPOSER & PIANIST

Forgiveness and love come from within, they grow from the seeds we plant and they stem from our heart. It's from nourishment and nurture that they flourish and enlighten us. We all have these emotions and qualities but as life and hardships take their toll, the ability to love and forgive may become a forgotten practice or one that has faded over time.

Music has a powerful ability to break down walls, to open communication, and to allow a listener to find peace within. When we contemplate we dig deep and we ponder the things that drive us, trouble us, or leave us unfulfilled. We don't listen to the subject matter of the song in the way the writer intended, but rather, we apply it to our own lives. How often have you heard a song that brings you to tears? The ability to feel something and be moved is a wonderful thing and there in lies the magic of music and its full healing capacity.

The nature of the music we listen to is important to this process. Not all music is positive and not all music leaves an impact that is valuable. If we listen to Heavy Metal, swearing, abusive content, or vulgarity then that is what we absorb and reflect. However, on the flip side, if we listen to music that holds love and joy then we take happiness with us and it cheers us up. If we listen to music that allows us to think or contemplate then we dig down deep within our own psyche and learn important lessons about our surrounds and ourselves. Its as if the music becomes a conduit to our own reflection.

I have always advocated that Instrumental, Ambient/New Age Music, is far more powerful to us in our everyday lives as it doesn't impose its own suggestion on us. Ambient music gives us a chance to react and take something away that is self-driven. The composer suggests a subject matter, but the listener interprets it in their own way. Creatively and emotionally, we are enabled by allowing music to touch us.

A significant value of music is that there is no language barrier; we all understand musical intention regardless of age, gender, or nationality. Music binds us and gives us one voice. Music has often been called the universal language for this reason. During my own musical journey as a composer, I have found the process of love and forgiveness to be an integral part of my life. Some people will put pen to paper, I sit at the piano and write my thoughts as music.

It's a form of synchronicity, I take a subject matter and turn it into a piece of music. Often I explore my personal journey and pour my emotion of the moment into the music. There is sadness in beauty and beauty in sadness, and so the listener is able to take something different than what was originally given by the composer during the process of writing. The concept of contemplation and self-awareness through ambient music is explained by this phenomenon. I can't imagine life without music, it allows us to connect to the world around us. When words leave us, music begins.

Forgiveness and Love come from within, they grow from the seeds we plant and they stem from our heart.





Dean Letfus | DIRECTOR & FOUNDER OF **THE FORGIVENESS GUY**

Our pathway is often changed by one significant event and in my three decades of watching people struggle with life's curve balls, I have seen decisions to stay hurt, bitter, and resentful destroy more lives than any other thing. Unforgiveness should carry a "Highly Dangerous!" warning label. What starts as a justified hurt and need to forgive turns into bitterness and hatred, often ending in mental illness and even suicide. Even physical ailments such as asthma and arthritis can have their roots in unforgiveness. I watched an older woman completely healed of arthritis in front of my eyes when she finally forgave her sister whom she had hated for sixty years!

We need to forgive because unforgiveness puts us in a prison.

I have found music and specifically worship to be a place where we can learn to be "willing to be made willing" to forgive those who have wounded us. It is difficult to sing of our freedom and victory in Jesus when we are in an emotional prison of our own doing. In fact many of us live with a cognitive dissonance where we love God and even though God says we cannot love Him if we hate our brother, we somehow manage it.

I remember as a teenager working as a DJ in a nightclub in New Zealand, in the era of bands like KISS, Michael Jackson, and Earth Wind and Fire. I would sometimes play "I was made for loving you" by KISS, and almost every time a fight would break out in the club. Even as a pre-Christian, I discovered that music could control and influence people's emotions and even behaviour. There was a terrible plane crash in the early 1980's called the Erebus disaster. I would play "After the love is gone" by Earth Wind and Fire, and dedicate it to the Erebus families, and could get an entire nightclub to burst into tears. I cite these examples simply to illustrate that music has power, significant power to affect our souls and our spirits. So listening to and singing real truth helps us deal with our need for justice and come to a place to extend mercy to those who need forgiving.



The most important thing by far to be understood about forgiveness is this: we need to forgive because unforgiveness puts us in a prison. The object of our resentment often has no idea they have hurt us and can even be dead. But the cancer continues until we forgive. So forgiving is 100% about setting us free, and is entirely unrelated to the offenders attitude or repentance.

Scott Grace | AUTHOR & SINGER-SONGWRITER

I had been on the warpath with my mom for several years, beating the drum of battle, and I had to admit on some level I liked it. I was having an ego party, and forgiveness was not invited. The anger made me feel strong and powerful in a relationship where I had so often felt weak and emasculated. So I continued to harbor hard feelings towards her, holding them close to my chest like a shield that kept me safe and protected, one that she could never pierce through and get to my heart.

I was fairly certain that she was three thousand miles away telling a similar story, except her tale had me starring as the villain, with her being the innocent victim of her son's undeserved wrath. We both had collected ample evidence to stick to our stories, and be rigid and self-righteous about them. Yet she was getting close to eighty years old, and I did not feel I had the luxury of unlimited time to wait until I felt in the mood to give up my stony silence and end the stalemate between us. On a freezing January morning in Michigan, I finally prayed to release the bitterness I held towards my mother. I told the universe that even though I didn't feel willing to forgive her, I wanted to become willing, and needed some assistance to get there. I had a good cry and, in admitting that I had dug my heels in and needed some help getting out, felt some relief. There was an opening, and a pinprick of light entered a darkened room.



My creative life has shown me that music soothes the savage beast. It helps heal what is savage inside us. It helps take our attention from survival to joy and celebration, from the consciousness of fight or flight to an elevated place. Not all music, of course. Music that comes from the heart and soul of artists who are transcending their egos as they write and play, that music helps the listeners transcend their egos as they listen. Music can offer us a glimpse, vision, a moment to be out of our minds and come to our senses. When music moves us, in the heart, and even the body through dancing, we are different people. We change. Music is a gift from the angels. All of us have had our moods transformed, our defences softened, and our hearts stirred by the power of music. Music that carries the direct intention to heal and uplift takes that power to new and expanded potential.

I was having an ego party, and forgiveness was not invited.

Suzanne Doucet | COMPOSER, MUSICIAN & PRODUCER

Since I can remember, there was an innermost intention to express in art and music what I perceived of the world small and at large. I started drawing when I was three and playing music wherever I could find something that would make a sound. When I was able to write I started creating poetry and short stories, starting at the age of nine. This urge to express never ended. I was able to overcome many challenges in life through my gift to express, which was a blessing.



When I was eleven years old I had a piano teacher who introduced me to a method called "The Inner Hearing." This method was a process of awakening to the reality of inner dimensions and the recognition that "The World is Sound—Nada Brahma" as the Indians say. I started composing music.

The love and gratitude I received through this process was much more than one could expect on a personal level and the effects on others of my art, writing, and music had was another wonderful gift and experience. I always felt that if one person could be reached and touched deeply, I had accomplished my goal. I was able to reach many beings and sharing my creative expression was much more gratifying than I ever expected.

Art, Poetry, and Music brings us all back to our true nature, which is Love, Forgiveness, Joy, and Peace.

One personal incident of how music can facilitate forgiveness was when I had a very traumatic experience when I was very young. It was the attempt of a rape which I escaped with a blue eye and a broken finger. The man who did this to me became a very famous writer and many years later I found myself at a party where he was present. I was asked to sing a song and there was this man in this small audience sitting in front of me. I felt a lot of pain and anxiety, but I took my guitar and sang a song I composed to a poem of Rudyard Kipling. The poem is called "IF." After I finished, the man started crying and weeping, and came to me asking for forgiveness.

So, yes—I know deep in my heart that whatever works through us and enables us to express love and beauty comes from a non personal place we all share and that's why we feel so deeply touched, whether we are "creators" or "perceivers"—it is ultimately the same. We all share this together. This is why art, poetry, and music brings us all back to our true nature, which is love, forgiveness, joy, and peace.

Harmony—balance and freedom—is at the core of all beings. Music as the most transparent form of art has a divine quality which is in it's nature spiritual and transcending. I hope that music and art will bring humanity to a recognition which allows everyone to become free from feeling "separated" and where everyone feels consciously connected and will not harm other beings out of fear and confusion.

Karen Drucker | SINGER-SONGWRITER

Music has the ability to bypass our over chattering minds and go straight into our hearts. There are no words to describe the way that when we hear a piece of music or see a piece of art, we feel something in our soul that stirs our emotions. Our hearts are the gatekeeper to our soul and when music can open that door a crack, that is where the capacity for love and forgiveness can enter. I recall a time in my life when I was holding on to a grudge about someone and was not wiling to let it go. I was driving along in my car with the radio on and suddenly a song comes on that I remembered being special to this person. In that instant, there was a little crack, a place for a sweet memory to come in, and with that opening the love pushed its way in, and I was left with a feeling of love and ultimately forgiveness.

I am so blessed to be part of a "tribe" of New Thought musicians that promote positive message music. There are many of us singing, writing, and performing songs that have a positive message to inspire and uplift people. I believe that the music we listen to affects our values and how we live in this world. A song that promotes kindness and compassion affects everyone that hears it, and hopefully that message ripples around the world.



Music encourages me to tell the truth. As a songwriter, I have to look into my heart and tell the truth about my values, what I am feeling, what is going on with me, and hopefully say that in a way that other people will be moved. If I am not true to my heart and soul, I believe the listener can feel that and the song will just not work. The feedback I have gotten from my songs always comes down to the more vulnerable and real and true to my values I am the more moving the song will be.

Love pushed its way in, and I was left with a feeling of love and ultimately forgiveness.

Dudley Evenson | MUSICIAN

As I prepared for the birth of my first child over forty years ago, one of the things I knew I needed to deal with was my long-standing conflict with my parents. Ever since my husband, Dean Evenson, and I had been living together and growing our hair out and expressing our controversial ideas against war and for civil rights issues, we had an uncomfortable relationship with my parents. Since I had begun to see the world differently from my parents and develop a more free spirited lifestyle in keeping with my true nature, we had not been able to see eye-to-eye and I had felt terribly judged by them. It hurt me deeply. As I approached my own parenthood, I started to thoughtfully look at what was going on.



One day, I had the startling realization that I had equally strong judgments about my parents as they did of me. I judged their judgments, their prejudices, their conservatism, their materialism, and their affluent lifestyle. It occurred to me, on the eve of my becoming a mother, that I couldn't change them, but I could change myself. I could let go of my judgments and love them unconditionally. With some effort, but also with a great feeling of relief I did just that. I let the love return that I had felt in my earlier years, and I just appreciated them as who they are, not who I thought they should be. Interestingly, within a few weeks, we had the first real communication in years. I hadn't sent them a letter or called to announce my change of heart, but somehow, it had gotten through, and we renewed our family ties.

You can create a forgiveness mantra and sing it to yourself.

Years later I took a workshop that introduced the idea of "Changing Your Telepathic Agreement" with someone you are in conflict with. The way it works is this—you bring that person into your consciousness and in a meditative state you speak to their 'higher self.' At the beginning, you let them have it. In other words, you say all the things that are bothering you about that person, words that you might not want to say in person but what you are truly feeling. By the end of the first session you shift and begin to say things like "but I understand how you may have become this way," or "I know you are trying to change." You do the meditation day after day with each day having less of the first part; "you make me mad, you hurt me," and more of the second part; "we are getting closer to understanding, I forgive you." You can create a forgiveness mantra and sing it to yourself. It could be something simple like "I forgive you and you forgive me." Give it a melody and sing it whenever the person comes to mind. If you do this practice with conviction and repetition, you will find that soon, your projection of the conflict is changing and no matter how much they may have harmed you, when you think of that person, your thoughts won't carry as much charge, and eventually you will find a peaceful resolution of the conflict with them. In any event, you will have more inner peace, and isn't that what forgiveness is all about?

Julie Fulkerson | CONSULTANT & VIOLINIST

I used to pride myself on being able to do several activities at one time. I play the violin. While playing chamber music with friends, I could simultaneously make lists of things to do the next day, replay a conversation from earlier in the week, plan a fundraiser or wonder if I should clip my nails. The mundane slipped into the moments that could have been filled with music and unencumbered relationships with my friends.

Fortunately, somewhere along the path, I read research that countered the prevailing business and academic culture I was steeped in. In brief, current studies informed me that it was not even healthy or productive to multi-task. Though it was a gradual transition, now when I sit with my string quartet, I am with the music, the sounds, the reverberations, the ever-changing possibilities… in each moment. Nothing is static or even permanent. We can *play* the same Beethoven quartet and know it will never *sound* the same. Thousands before us have played the same notes; many will play them into the future. Each time this great music is played, we enliven Beethoven's genius and hopefully some of our own.



Forgiveness, and even love, is a big part of making music. Believe me, as a child and learning to play the violin requires both in large measure. If my parents had not been able to over look the squawking sounds and poor intonation, I would not be playing today. Instead, their constant encouragement kept me going. When I couldn't stand the harsh and imperfect sounds, my mother would play along with me to enhance the overall result.

I do not practice any religion and yet I am deeply moved by the sounds of monks singing Gregorian Chants, a children's choir in a cathedral, bells and chants in a temple, a Bach Motet in the Cloisters, spirituals in the church, saxophones in the subway, and a Mendelssohn Quartet in my own living room.

Forgiveness, and even love, is a big part of making music.

Music is a place where the mundane and unimportant falls away and gives room to all possibilities. It is the perfect meditation. Musical mistakes and momentary conflict between players is dropped with each new note moving forward. With each note and phrase, my focus is on the sound, harmony, movement, mood, balance, and the reverberations. Once in awhile, I am distracted but usually by the realization that the composer, years ago, was also in the moment, forgiving the mistakes and loving the music.

Appassionante | VOCALISTS

Music's language is pure, clear, and sincere because it is able to penetrate into our souls and give shape to our thoughts and deepest feelings, like love and forgiveness. Love and forgiveness are sides of the same coin. There is no love without forgiveness and forgiveness is a noble act of love. Through music we've learnt to open our hearts and to accept the beauty of life in harmony with all the joys and all the pains.

Both love and forgiveness are connected to music as a single chord.

Music is universal, and communicates not only important values such as solidarity, brotherhood, and peace, but it can also be a tool against any kind of violence, hatred, and negativity. In fact, the harmony of its notes can also teach us that we are able to live in tune with everything that surrounds us. The differences are not important for music because often these are at the heart of the greatest musical compositions and the soul of the greatest singers. Music is able to open doors to new realities, it can be there when you need it, it can be your voice when you don't know what to say, it can make you dream, escape, fly, think, or it can simply help us to have more self awareness.



Both love and forgiveness are connected to music as a single chord that is able to touch those who can listen and who have the simplicity of a smile and a glance. Forgiveness is in the contradictions we encounter around the world, it is in the sad helplessness of not being able to change anything about the injustices suffered by men, women, and children. Yet the true power of forgiveness is to be aware of it and not to be indifferent. Forgiveness is a sign of humanity and a true act of love. We feel all of this because we are reflected through our audience, we get involved, confused, we change with them, we are them and we hope they can be us in the moment our music touches their hearts. We are one, and it is at that moment that love takes its highest value, in participation and union. Our experience is life itself, the stage is our place, our voices are our existence, and it is thanks to this opportunity that we can bring messages of love and forgiveness with enormous responsibility and are careful not to waste it. We will continue to love and forgive without asking for anything in return, because to love and forgive is already being loved and forgiven.

Trudie Noah Clem | AUTHOR & NOVELIST

The arts have given me an outlet to express my deepest thoughts and emotions. I am an artist, an author, and a nursing supervisor. I have enjoyed being exposed to all manner of the arts as a child. When I was younger I dreamed of being an artist. I love to paint landscapes, animals, and even sometimes a portrait. The colors of the paint, the brush strokes portray movement in the composition and evoke emotions when relating to the painting. When I am painting I can camouflage the flaws and elaborate on the beauty. To me, true love does this very thing; when you love a person you can choose to see past their flaws, to forgive and move on to enjoy the beauty that drew you to this person in the first place.

Music also does this for me by settling my emotions when I am perplexed by people whom I feel have wronged me. Spiritually motivating music expressing God's love can influence deep within my soul to help me move past the wrongs that I have encountered and release them. I have heard it said that unforgiveness and bitterness is like drinking poison and expecting the other person to die. I try very hard to forgive and resolve my anger before "the sun goes down." Listening to music, letting the words and rhythm, reach inside me to restore balance and reflect on reconciliation.



I try very hard to forgive and resolve my anger before "the sun goes down."

There have been times when I was so angry, usually when I had been betrayed; that the only thing that could get through to me was music. Counselling by a well-meaning soul who wanted to help only threw me deeper into the pit of self-pity. There have been times in my life I have done some pretty stupid things that I could not forgive myself for. Music expressing the greatest act of chivalry is God's euphoric love pouring out on me, which I felt I did not deserve. No matter how bad I feel about myself I am reminded only he can satisfy the emptiness in my heart restoring my spiritual balance.

A written word of encouragement can boost someone's self-esteem at a moment when they are ready to just call it quits. I find joy in helping others see their potential, even when they are frustrated and angry about their situation. The novel I wrote "Live, Love, Forgive" expresses our need to be loved and to forgive each other and ourselves. Not infatuation or romance but true love that grows with the test of time.

God created the arts from the beginning of time. We are born of God, created by Him, nothing perfectly fills the void in us until we are able to turn all the love energy He gives to us, outwardly in universal love to Father God and to all mankind.

Application

Q: Keep track of the artistic experiences you have that convey love and forgiveness. How are they different?

Q: Does love or forgiveness (or both) resonate with you as to your own creative pursuits?

Q: How would you define love and forgiveness for yourself?



COMPASSION & HEALING


LOVE
LIVE
FORGIVE

Do you remember listening to a piece of music that tugged on the heart strings while you thought of someone else? Have you taken in a piece of art that triggers the same response? Art expands our capacity to understand and experience compassion and it gives us an opportunity to respond. It is often the stories behind the art and the artist that offers context and compels a deeper response from the heart. Compassion also builds a bridge between love and forgiveness by putting the other in our shoes, if just for a moment. Compassion can motivate our desire to act, to respond to the suffering of another.

Compassion can also serve us throughout our life and inspire healing. The bridge between compassion and healing may connect us to a deeper source of inner peace and joy. Healing is an essential element of the human experience. We each need space and time to heal, whatever our pain, so that we can fully move on. Art offers an opportunity to understand our own healing process. As a creator or a receiver, art gives us access to a different perspective, we can see things in a new light and from a different angle. When we open ourselves up and become vulnerable, we are giving permission to be blessed and touched in a way that can be calming, soothing, and ultimately creating a holistic experience of art.

The artists featured in this chapter explore the themes of compassion and healing. Among those included, author and international authority on sound healing, Jonathan Goldman, reflects on "the power of compassion and kindness as one of the great secrets of the universe." Bobby BeauSoleil finds a progressive path, "from peace arises love, from love arises compassion, from compassion arises forgiveness." In addition, author and writer Dale M. Kushner highlights how "art fortifies our capacity for compassion," and vocalist Erakah expresses how at some point we all need "to choose to move on, to start living and healing."

Reflection

Q: In what ways do artists communicate compassion through their art?

Q: What connections do you see between compassion and healing?

Q: How do these artists use their art to heal?

Dale M. Kushner | AUTHOR & WRITER

Have you ever read a book, seen a movie, or found yourself repeating lyrics you swear were lifted from your life? Have you ever been blown away by riffing guitars? Ever stared into the eyes of a stranger in a photograph and felt a shudder of recognition? Has a painting of a battle given you the chills? Art presents someone else's version of the world that we recognize as our own.

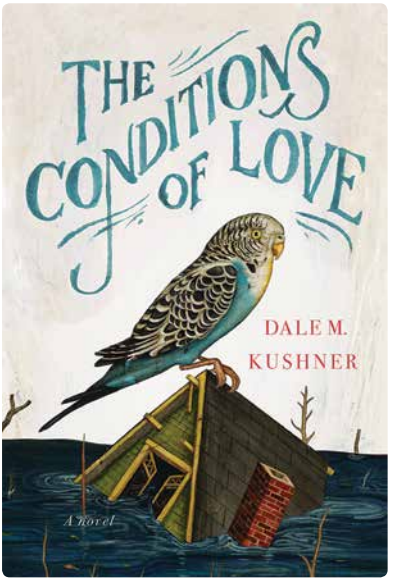
The creation of art is a basic human instinct that cuts across all cultures. Tribal chiefs, medicine men, and before them, our primordial ancestors lived in a world in which art wasn't Art, it was a sacred head-dress, a holy bead necklace, a ritual clay pot. It was the song sung to the spirits to praise their generosity or request help. Art was what we lived and how we spoke to the Divine. Shamans, our first poets, brought us survival-chants from the gods.

This yearning to connect with a spiritual world has not disappeared, only gone underground. As a writer, I tell stories, one of the oldest of human arts. All of us tell stories—to ourselves, to others. Gossip is story; texting is story; dream is story. Everywhere on earth, people exchange stories and through the interchange recognize their kinship with a vast human family. It's almost impossible to imagine a world without stories, music, painting, dance—symbolic representations of our deepest emotions. We may cry out to God for help, but we are also pack animals. We need our packs. Without them, we're wild with loneliness. When we compose a symphony because an unstoppable melody pushes to get out, what brings us joy—its creation—becomes a gift to others.



Art fortifies our capacity for compassion, which means "to suffer with," by allowing us to step into experiences radically different from our own. Here's an example: I read a novel about an African boy forced into a terrorist organization. The boy becomes a soldier for the cause. I'm horrified by the actions of the group, but as I read the book I feel the terror the boy must feel. I understand his bewilderment, his rage, his fear—feelings like

my own. My world and the African boy's world come a bit closer, and because I more deeply understand his helplessness and sorrow, I can forgive the perpetuation of violence. Another example: ever think you'd cry over a vampire's troubles? In the world of pop culture, vampires have their tragedies, and their moral dilemmas. Who knew a vampire's life could be so tough!



Art fosters empathy, breaks down our sense of isolation, speaks to our longing for permanence and marriage to the Divine. I must have known this as a child. I never dreamed of being a writer, but my head buzzed with other universes where I was not alone. At night while my family slept, I conversed with my dolls and together we inhabited a secret world. They bore witness to my dreads and sorrows. They laughed at my jokes. Though I never wrote down our conversations, my writing life had begun.

Writing a novel transformed me. "The Conditions of Love" took years to write during which time I faced many upheavals. I learned I had to ignore the scary movies in my head, movies about one type of failure or another. I discovered that even without a map to the territory, I had the courage to stay with my project and face the unknown. I had to forgive myself over and over for being self-critical; I learned that without compassion for myself I would sink. My writing raised difficult subjects, but I kept going spurred by the intention of telling the truth. Determined I was and am. Writing a novel showed me I could endure a kind of suffering similar to prolonged labor without the guarantee that a baby would be born.

Every piece of art is a statement about the human condition, every effort to create, a reflection of our tender, brutal, poignant selves. Art inserts its presence into our lives because it is life-giving and because we would not be quite human without it.

Art fortifies our capacity for compassion, which means "to suffer with."



Dana Fuchs | ACTRESS & SINGER-SONGWRITER

Art is almost always an expression of the self observing others in a way that resonates with our own self. Through this "art" we create something that is both cathartic for our "self" and inspired by others. This is a pure example of how interconnected we all really are. My happiness is as important to me as another being's happiness is to them. Right there we can find a huge and limitless compassion for others! As soon as we realize that we are all seeking the same peace and happiness, we can see that we are all fighting the same hard battle. We see how our needs are all the same and then I think we find a deeper capacity for love and forgiveness.

Whether it's "happy" or "dark" art, when another being resonates with it, they feel less isolated. Some of the saddest, darkest songs ever written are the ones that give me the most hope. It's always comforting to know you're not alone. If it's a bright happy song it can cheer you up, but if it's a sad song about the human condition, then you can feel less alone. I think all art can do this, not just music. Great films, paintings, poetry, novels, or dance. We just need to feel connected to something and art does that. For me, music especially does it. After all, it is the universal language.

After a while, you have to dig deeper as a songwriter and performer if you're going to be able to stomach yourself every day and sleep at night. You have to move beyond your own feelings and tap into those feelings of others. Not only is this the truest way to get fresh material for the listener, for me it is the only way to have the passion to perform night after night after night. No matter if I am sick, tired, sad, lonely, discouraged, or self-conscious; it forces me to transform all of those demons into something that can be shared with my audience. In turn, they may transform some of their own demons and this is something we can all experience together as we travel through the hard and beautiful life together.



[Tapping] into those feelings of others…forces me to transform all of those demons into something that can be shared between me and the audience.

Jonathan Goldman | AUTHOR, MUSICIAN & TEACHER

When I was young boy, not even thirteen, the world seemed like a very crazy place as I was trying my best to figure things out. I didn't understand all that was going on around me. Now, over a half a century later, it seems even crazier than I could have imagined. I think I know less now than I did fifty years ago! There seems to be more greed and selfishness present than ever, and people seem to be less kind and caring towards each other. People seem more self-absorbed, forgetting about helping those in need. What we are doing to ourselves and to each other, we are also doing to our planet. There are those who say that if we don't begin making important changes, the Earth, as we know it, will become very different, and humankind as a species may simply not survive.

Now, I would not be writing the above paragraph, which is pretty frightening and depressing if I did not think there was a solution. I do. I think this solution is pretty easy. It's one that most of the great spiritual masters have presented in their teachings for many a millennium. What is it? Some would simply say: "Love and Forgiveness." Others would use the word "Compassion." Still others would just tell us: "Be kind to each other!" Regardless of which words you choose, the meaning is basically the same. The idea is called "The Golden Rule" and it tells us to treat others as we treat ourselves. In that understanding is the awareness that we need to treat ourselves nicely too.

The power of compassion and kindness is one of the great secrets of the universe.

I work with using sound and music as a way of healing ourselves and helping us feel good. It's something I've been studying now for over thirty years after having spent many years before that playing music for a living. When I'm able to share with people how they can use sound—particularly their own self-created sounds such as making a vowel sound or a hum—and experiencing powerful effects that make them feel good… well, there's nothing quite like it.

Among the most important sounds that I've been working with are sounds that help induce "Love and Forgiveness," "Compassion" or "Kindness" to ourselves and others. My reason for this is that being able to work with the energy of love and compassion—kindness and forgiveness—is mandatory for the continued evolution of our species. If we can realize that the person next to us is just like us, we can start being nice to them. Instead of trying to take advantage of them, we can see there's a way to help or be kind. We can have cooperation instead of competition!

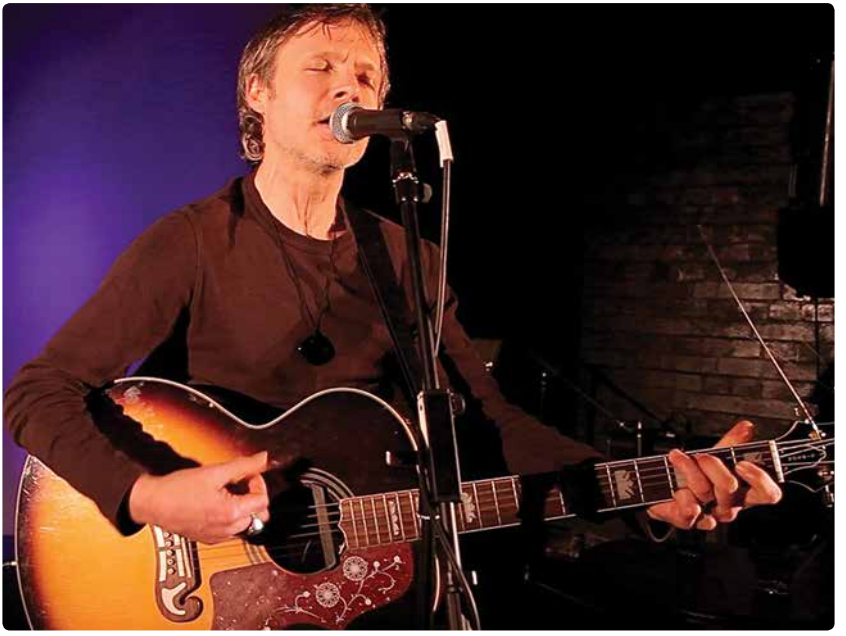
The power of compassion and kindness is one of the great secrets of the universe. When we are nice and kind to other people, we not only feel good ourselves, but we spread good feelings to others. It's really that simple and it's pretty fantastic. It's also true!

One thing I'd like to share is a simple technique that's guaranteed to help generate love, compassion, kindness, and all those other feelings we're talking about. This is creating the sound of "AH", the sound of the Heart Center—the energy center of Love, with our own voice. Think about it, when we really like something what's the sound we make? It's the sound of "Ahhhh."

How can you project compassion using sound? It's as simple as making the "AH" sound—especially when we're in a state of relaxation. Just by sitting and breathing deeply and calmly while making the sound of "AH," we can help generate Love and Compassion. This technique becomes even more powerful when we think of something that we're appreciative of—a pet or a friend or a parent or even a beautiful sunset—and we're able to have an attitude of gratitude while making this "AH" sound.

Sound is an extremely powerful tool and by working with the energy of self-created sounds such as the "AH," we can help generate the energy of compassion and help transform ourselves and our world. And what a glorious thing that would be.





Kavi Jezzie Hockaday | COMPOSER & MUSICIAN

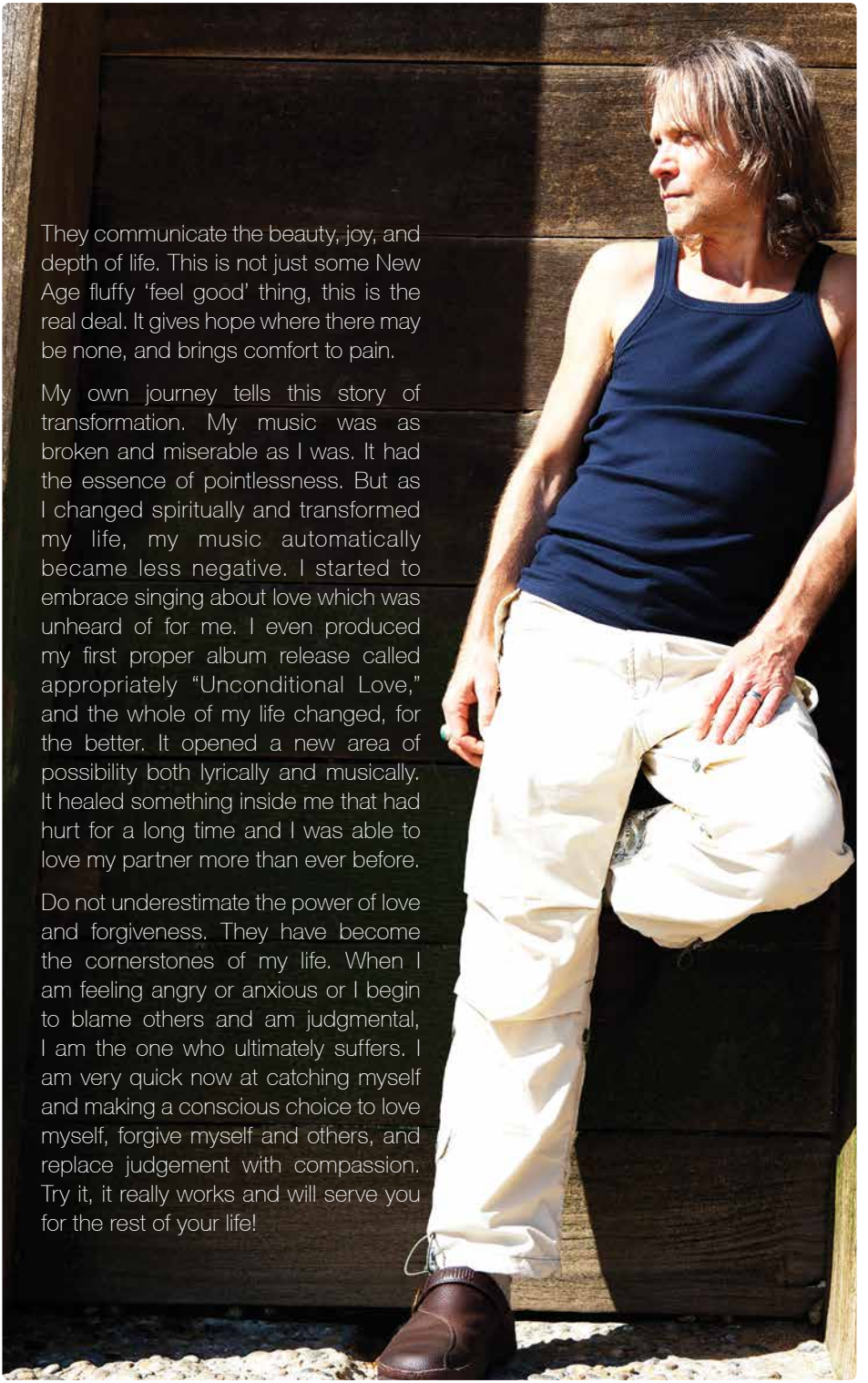
When I eventually stopped blaming other people, my parents, or the world for what I felt had gone wrong in my life, not only did the quality of my life itself improve, but also the quality of my music utterly changed. It turned me into a firm believer that the more we forgive both ourselves and others and the more we decide to love without agenda, the greater our creative offering is to the world.

Our art, whether it's music, painting, writing, or any form of creativity, is an expression of our innermost being. If we are tortured inside, full of angst, fear, or fury, it is this that will flavour our 'creation', and it is this that will be communicated to others. When people hear music, see art or read books, it's the 'feeling' they get that lingers, not what they think. As an artist, what is going on inside you is what will be felt. What the world needs now is love, and what people need now is forgiveness and compassion. Not more pain.

By looking within, letting go of grievances, and finding our deeper connection to one another, we open our heart to our own and everyone else's suffering. This leads us to compassion, and compassion has a high and healing vibration.

What the world needs now is love, and what people need now is forgiveness and compassion.

All things we think, feel, see, and touch have a vibration. Fear and anger have a low vibration and can be very destructive, whereas love and forgiveness vibrate at the highest level and are creative, healing, and deeply spiritual.



They communicate the beauty, joy, and depth of life. This is not just some New Age fluffy 'feel good' thing, this is the real deal. It gives hope where there may be none, and brings comfort to pain.

My own journey tells this story of transformation. My music was as broken and miserable as I was. It had the essence of pointlessness. But as I changed spiritually and transformed my life, my music automatically became less negative. I started to embrace singing about love which was unheard of for me. I even produced my first proper album release called appropriately "Unconditional Love," and the whole of my life changed, for the better. It opened a new area of possibility both lyrically and musically. It healed something inside me that had hurt for a long time and I was able to love my partner more than ever before.

Do not underestimate the power of love and forgiveness. They have become the cornerstones of my life. When I am feeling angry or anxious or I begin to blame others and am judgmental, I am the one who ultimately suffers. I am very quick now at catching myself and making a conscious choice to love myself, forgive myself and others, and replace judgement with compassion. Try it, it really works and will serve you for the rest of your life!



Bobby BeauSoleil

COMPOSER & MUSICIAN

Love and forgiveness have origin in the heart of the sentient soul, and are communicated by way of conscious intention. In and of themselves neither sound nor light, being insentient, possesses any intrinsic transformative facility. Photons, electrons, molecules, all that is just stuff. The qualified practitioner, or artist, may imbue a medium with the power to transform by using it as a conduit for the transmission of a conscious intention, or desire, perhaps even divine inspiration. One who appreciates the resulting artifact may be moved to resonate with the qualities placed within it by the artist. Love and forgiveness may be experienced when perceiving the object provided these qualities were experienced by the artist while shaping it, thus investing it with a conscious intention to communicate a spirit of love and forgiveness.

Let's be clear. It is as easy to compose a song that communicates fear and resentment, as it is to compose one that communicates love and forgiveness. Just because a thing is musical is not necessarily an indication that it derives out of kind-heartedness. A sculpted rock is actually more likely to appear as something ugly than to inspire by its beauty, as so few sculptors are truly inspired or possess the skills necessary to translate their vision and intention into a work of beautiful art.

From peace arises love, from love arises compassion, from compassion arises forgiveness.

That said, artists and musicians are a sensitive and introspective lot. The inward gaze leads ultimately to the spiritual heart where peace reigns supreme. From peace arises love, from love arises compassion, from compassion arises forgiveness (if there is a need for someone to be forgiven) and naturally from there follow all of the higher levels of conscious awareness. An artist who knows how to subdue the distraction of petty desires and surrender to the influence of peace, will tend to be empowered with genuine inspiration and with his or her intention create art that is moving to the one who perceives it.

Gazing at a visual image or listening to a song that is harmonious in its composition and execution will tend to put one in a harmonious state. Sound, being in its invisibility the most subtle of the sense objects, is the most apt to draw one's awareness inward. While low bass frequencies may sometimes be felt in the belly, for the most part music is only experienced in the psyche from where it may readily seep into the heart. At its best, at its highest, art is an inward expression perceived and experienced inwardly.

Developing the ability to hear and sing the song of the heart has been central to my life for as long as I can remember, long before I knew how to articulate this notion with words. It seems to me that the capacity to love and forgive is always present, requiring no transformation. Knowing that this capacity exists is at least halfway to the goal of realizing it.





Moby | DJ, PRODUCER & PHOTOGRAPHER

One of the reasons why music in particular is so ubiquitous and so universal with love is that it reaches people on a very profound emotional level. Often times, I feel like music can reach people on an almost softer, deeper, and more vulnerable level than people might normally experience on a day to day basis. I think to understand music's ability to foster love and forgiveness, it sometimes helps to look at their opposites. To me, the opposite of love isn't necessarily hate. The opposite of love is judgment, and the opposite of forgiveness is bitterness and resentment.

I feel like music in particular can open people up to a more honest, vulnerable, softer side, which is really where love and forgiveness arise. A theory I have about human emotion, is that in a very broad sense, there are two emotional states that human beings have—there's a state of defensiveness and a state of openness. You could use other adjectives—you could say there's hard and there's soft and there's defensive and there's vulnerable. I think that love and forgiveness, they come from that place of openness, softness, and vulnerability. The harder emotional states; anger, bitterness, defensiveness, and cynicism are usually masks for the softer states. My experience is that for the majority of people, myself included, it's really easy to succumb to the harder emotional states—the anger, defence, bitterness, without looking at what's underneath.

When I'm forgiving of someone, it's because I'm looking at them and I'm hopefully filled with a true sense of compassion.

I think that forgiveness—really true forgiveness—needs to come from the softer emotions that lie under the hard emotions, but most of us don't have much training in looking behind the harder emotions. A lot of our culture reinforces these harder emotions. We have a culture that glorifies anger, bitterness, and retribution. One thing that art and music can do is enable people to access these softer emotional states from where true love and forgiveness arise.

Forgiveness can really only be truly meaningful with self-awareness. Forgiveness should not involve judgement or retribution or bitterness. When I'm forgiving of someone, it's because I'm looking at them and I'm hopefully filled with a true sense of compassion. I don't see them as a completely separate other being, I see them as being a human similar to me and whatever that person has done, I see that I have probably done similar things as well. I can see that when I've done bad things it's usually because I've been insecure or afraid. I can look at that other person and say, "Oh, they're insecure and afraid as well," and create a much deeper sense of forgiveness.



Demi Amparan | POET & DIRECTOR OF PUBLICATIONS & COMMUNICATIONS AT **YOUNG CHICAGO AUTHORS**

My music is a direct reflection of my life. I talk about growing up in Chicago, race, class, fatherhood, and a plethora of other topics within my songs. I do this as a form of self-therapy, in hopes of gaining a better sense of understanding from my peers and to better relate to others. I think our capacity for love and forgiveness expands when we can understand each other's stories and backgrounds. If we can relate to a person's perspective and differences, it's then hopefully possible for us to begin the process of love and forgiveness.

When I was a youth in Englewood, Chicago, it was always a danger for me to do something as simple as walking home from school. The area was too violent for safe travel. One night, I lost my best friend to a hit and run accident by a drunk police officer. That following month I lost a classmate to a gunshot. Now, when I told people this story and tried to explain my heartbreak, It was a mix of emotions. Some who were from a comparable environment could relate to me and feel my sadness over losing a friend. As a matter of fact, most could feel that. It's a very human emotion to loose someone. Yet many did not feel and could not relate to the anger I had for the classism, racism, and poverty that I felt were in some ways responsible for the loss of my friends.

Our capacity for love and forgiveness expands when we can understand each other's stories and backgrounds.





It wasn't until I made a song called "Shot a Nigga" that my peers were able to see my perspective a little bit clearer. They were able to reflect more. Understand what it was like growing up in my neighborhood. That allowed them to begin a conversation centered around love with me. It made me believe that our capacity to understand one's story is what sparks genuine feelings of love and the process of forgiveness. Music is just one of many art forms that allows an artist such as myself the creative freedom to express my feelings, and put them in the open for audiences to critique, enjoy, and most importantly love.

I think art and music have the capability to communicate any positive value an artist wants it to. I believe this to be true because art is essentially a reflection of ones thoughts, values, and emotions. Personally, I try and communicate the value of understanding the most. I come from a place that is too frequently misunderstood. I try and show the beautiful, brutal, and ugly side of my environment, and show people that all three of those things are equally valuable.

Being a rapper and teaching artist, I've become more alert and understanding to people's feelings and perspective. When I started doing music it was tunnel vision. I only saw my hood, my circles, and my thoughts. After, talking to people all over the world and expanding my intake of art, I've found such valuable stories and perspectives that relate to mine more than I could have ever imagined.



Aeoliah | AUTHOR & MUSICIAN

Art and music is a reflection of the artist's soul and their consciousness. If the artist's intent is to infuse love and compassion into the music, then there is a good chance that listeners will feel that. For me personally, music has great power to inspire love and light that spark of hope in so many broken hearts and a troubled humanity. The more we open to love, the greater our capacity for forgiveness. The more the music is heart-opening, the greater capacity we have for both love and forgiveness.

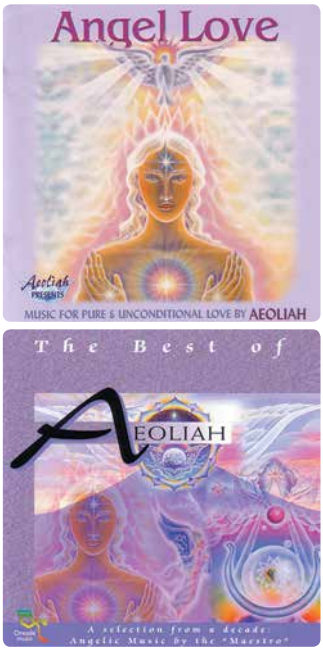
Music and art have a great value when the artist's consciousness is in touch and alignment with higher reality, God-consciousness, call it what you will, the soul, spirit, or higher self. Once the ego and intellect of the composer makes way for this higher "connection" the ability to infuse the creation with higher levels of universal intelligence, love, and inspiration is limitless and can be quite transforming.

My values always come first. Expression comes from deep within the self. The more self-realized a soul is, the more they will reflect a higher universal love and intelligence that is beyond the ego and intellect. For me, the more I work on developing myself, my awareness, releasing ego, and intellect through daily meditation practices, mindfulness, and integrating the higher awareness of this limitless universal energy into my daily life, my values will start to reflect that. This reflection will then automatically manifest into all creative expression and life experiences.

Refining, fine-tuning, and seeking "ultimate perfection" can also be an elusive trap if we don't see the bigger picture that perfection already exists within

If the artist's intent is to infuse love and compassion into the music, then there is a good chance that listeners will feel that.

us all, once we remove the veils of illusion, ego, and intellect, we can access this beauty directly. Your ability to unconditionally love and accept life as it is, including yourself, without projecting an idealized concept of what perfection should be, allows you to experience a deeper level of acceptance which brings more harmony and peace into your life.



Perfection is a state of awareness that transcends the limited perception of the mind. It is the nature of the mind to subject and engage itself with continuous comparisons, analysis, and objectification of an ideal that is not real. When you realize this truth, you will see and experience perfection in all things without your mind struggling to create it. See the beauty of all life in its natural state without projecting an idealized image of what you think it should be or look like. This does not mean that you have to give up your quest for attaining the highest and best you can be or achieve.

Each soul is a work in progress; growing, learning, healing, adjusting, and fine-tuning, until it eventually reaches a state of self-mastery and self-realization. However, the growth and expansion doesn't stop there. That is only the beginning. As the soul becomes self-realized, it ascends from the treadmill of transmigration and suffering, and merges with the universe and all-that-is. The realization, merging, and expansion of this one, greater, universal Self continues throughout Infinity. That is another level of perfection, which is infinite.

Thomas Colohan | ARTISTIC DIRECTOR OF THE WASHINGTON MASTER CHORALE

I have been singing for as long as I can remember. My large working-class Irish Catholic family sang always; my many siblings sang the folk music of the 1960s mostly, and in harmony; a wondrous sound to my toddler ears. My mother sang Catholic hymns next to me in church, her voice strong and confident. My dad did laundry singing popular tunes from the 1940s with a spirit so carefree you would have thought he had never known a day of sorrow. It flowed out of all of us like a kind of elevated speech.

When I was fourteen I joined my high school concert choir. This choir was a miracle to me. You see, though my family was musical, I had no formal music training before high school. So those black dots and lines on the page were mysterious to me. I was amazed to discover that when the choir followed those dots correctly we would consistently produce the most marvellous sound! So, my love affair with choral music was born in that choir, and I became a conductor.

A miracle. I use this spiritual word intentionally because my spiritual journey and my musical journey have always been intertwined, perhaps even the same journey. My mother set me on my spiritual path. In her later years she shifted from traditional Catholic piety to a wider, almost mystical wisdom, and she shared this with me. This mystical Christian view and the rich traditions associated with it still inform my spiritual life. As I grew older my lens gradually widened to embrace many more religious practices, until ultimately I came to a Zen meditation practice, with its all-encompassing perspective, its insight into the impermanence of all things, and the idea of no "self."

When I stand in front of my chorus and hear their unified voices raised in song, I know I am hearing the very heart of compassion, the true voice of humanity.

Which brings me back to the choir. No "self." That is what being in a chorus is all about. It begins at the surface. The skills we cultivate during music making—cooperation, listening, pausing, and taking turns—are the same skills that lead to a life filled with love and forgiveness. But it goes deeper than that. A room full of individuals, all with different voices, different sorrows and joys, different disappointments and aspirations, all come together in one place. For a short time, their voices are united. Each individual voice is fused into one sound. The music pours out, and at that moment the listeners too are one with each other and with the chorus. This result comes only as each individual lets go of the "self" and listens and blends their voice with all the other voices. When the music sounds, the imaginary differences that seem to separate us dissolve in the ocean of our connectedness. This is the embodiment of love and forgiveness, and it is what people mean when they talk about the power of music.

This is why I persevere as a conductor. Working every day in music helps me cultivate compassion, love, and forgiveness in my own life. Practicing meditation every day makes me a better conductor and musician because it enables me to set down my ego and the continuous distraction of my thinking. It allows me to be more present and attuned to others, not only in rehearsal and performances, but in all of my life. When I stand in front of my chorus and hear their unified voices raised in song, I know I am hearing the very heart of compassion, the true voice of humanity.





Erakah | VOCALIST

Forgive AND forget? I don't agree with this at all. I believe that I need to forgive and to mean it, not to use it against the person, but to forget? I believe that is what God does. I'm glad I haven't forgotten what happened to me, and parts of me are remembering every week. I suppose I've repressed memories and thrown away the key. Maybe forgiveness is the key that's unlocking my memories? I know the power of forgiveness and that is love, the biggest expression—to forgive someone is to give love when the situation doesn't deserve it. I never said the person, I said the situation.

Music hasn't always been part of my healing. It is only in the past year that I've realized that while it's helping my fans to heal or reminisce, it has been healing me. I like to include an element of truth in my songs, whether literal or figurative. We've realized that it's not just nice melodies, timbre, resonance, and harmonies. Music is a way to heal someone, help them to relive, or to damage someone. I've known people who have turned to music and not a doctor and who've said that the music was medicine enough to touch their heart in ways that medicine could never have.

The fact that I remember what happened to me, the punches, the poisoned words, the kicks, miscarriages, the rape, and just being forgotten by our justice system. It is enough to be deemed unforgivable by many, but I had to choose to move on, to start living and healing. It happened to me physically for three years, emotionally and mentally for six years. At times I've wanted to kill the dude, to make him pay slowly for what he did to me. To reopen the case and show everyone what he did to me and just make him rot in jail. Then forgiveness unlocks a memory I've buried deep in my brain and then love seeps through and I just have to forgive. I'm not a hero for this, I'm just doing to someone what I would want done to me. It's simple when you cut all of the stuff out because basically love covers all. People have told me that's not true, but then if it isn't, then why has love worked for me all these years?

I had to choose to move on, to start living and healing.

My past, present, and future is all wrapped up in my lyric writing and performing on stage. As a performer who writes from personal experience, it is hard to separate the emotion from the business, because I am the business. So I'll just keep on doing that, just being me and who I have turned out to be. My past has definitely changed who I am. What I believe and how I now know that the human heart and brain are linked in a way that when nothing makes sense to me at all, that music is a strong tool to either heal or destroy and love STILL covers all.



John Adorney | COMPOSER & MUSICIAN

To me, sitting at an instrument to compose music is like sitting on the beach, running my fingers through the sand. My fingers hit upon something solid, and I start to dig the sand away from around the object. I follow it's shape in whatever direction it dictates. Maybe it turns out to be just a rock buried under the sand and I toss it aside, or maybe it feels like something of significance. Every once in a while, it turns out that I happened upon a beautiful statue, a treasure that was buried in the sand. It's not like I created the object—I simply uncovered it.



Music is a magical substance. Where does it come from? Seemingly from out of nowhere—yet it moves us deeply, incites us to laugh, cry, dance, or be still. It reflects the miracle that is all around us all the time. But there is no miracle bigger than the human being, because we're the ones who can perceive and experience the miraculous.

Working with music is a great opportunity for me to be a part of bringing something meaningful and heartfelt into this world. When I compose music and in my music therapy practice, I'm always trying to come from my heart because I've see and experience the powerful impact music can have. When I compose a piece of music that's going to go onto a CD, the question that's most important to me is: "How does this music make me feel?" I know that if it moves me, it is likely to move someone else as well. I want to feel inspired, I want to be reminded of something beautiful. How the music makes me feel isn't something that can necessarily be put it into words, but that's part of the beauty of it.

Music has the power to help us get in touch with that contentment, that feeling of being complete.

When I think about how music relates to love and forgiveness, the thing that comes to mind immediately is the music therapy work I do here in Los Angeles with an organization called the Lotus Project.

The most striking thing to me about these groups is, first and foremost, the absolute beauty of these wonderful gems of human beings. The music therapy session is a chance for them to feel safe, to get in touch with and express what they're feeling at the moment without being judged, and to have fun making music. I've seen countless times how even the totally musically-untrained person can express themselves beautifully when an instrument is placed in their hands.

When a person feels content and happy, then love, forgiveness, and acceptance all feel natural and don't require effort. Music has the power to help us get in touch with that contentment, that feeling of being complete.

Heidi Cave | AUTHOR & SPEAKER

Art and music have the ability to disarm, to help us move beyond what's bothering us and soften our edges. Healing happens. Art brings new ideas and fresh vision. It expands our hearts and minds and disassembles walls we've built to make room for beauty and grace, for love.



Art inspires. It lifts us, taking us to higher places. It forces us to think. When I was working on my memoir, "Fancy Feet," I would get stuck and unsure of where to take a chapter. So I got in my car, turned up the volume of my music and drove. Words found me through music and gave me direction. Sometimes music moved the noise from my mind and calmed me, giving me space to breathe. Art can change us in positive and profound ways.

Art and music have the ability to disarm, to move beyond what's bothering us and soften our edges. Healing happens.

In order to write my story honestly and let the reader in, I had to dig deep and explore places I hadn't touched or seen in a long time. There was a section which was particularly hard for me to write. I had to confront the driver who had slammed into my car, taking my friend's life and devastating my own. 52% of my body was burnt, both my legs were amputated and I spent seven months in the burn unit because he chose to drive recklessly. He then lied, pinning his actions on the passenger in his car, his brother.

As I wrote and rewrote, researched what had happened on that life-changing evening on June 12, 1998, anger resurfaced and I realized I had never fully dealt with my feelings toward the driver. I was focused on healing and recovery —so much was lost—that I could not give the driver more than he had already claimed, so I pushed aside anger and concentrated on getting better. I was determined to be a survivor and not a victim. Sadness, loss, and fury were in front of me again, stirred up and pulsing through me. Every time I sat at my computer and typed what the police stated, why my friend's family was shattered, how we stood up in court to face him, I remembered, and I hurt.

I came to forgive the driver. I wrote him a letter expressing forgiveness. But, I found myself faced with the choice of grace again as I sat in the rubble of a battle fought long ago. After weeks of writing and sifting through buried and new emotions, I came to the conclusion I reached years ago. The need to forgive. Toward the end of a chapter titled "Redemption" I wrote, "it was better to let go than to hang on." I looked at that sentence and saw its truth. It is better to let go. Forgiveness found me anew and this time it was through my writing, my art.

Amy Camie | HARPIST & RECORDING ARTIST

Imagine you are a harp and all of your thoughts, experiences, feelings, ideas, fears, concerns, joys, everything is represented as a different string… I know… that's one big harp!

Now imagine that something really painful or scary happened to you, or maybe it was something really exciting and overwhelming. Picture that experience as one of the strings on the harp. Because it's something that either scared or overwhelmed you, you don't like to play that string any more. In fact, you'd like to take that string off the harp and forget about it forever. However, that's not how this harp works and you have to keep the string.

You go along for days, months, maybe even years not playing that string, trying to avoid remembering that really scary or overwhelming thing that happened. Then one day you accidentally pluck that string and all of those memories from that time come flooding back into your mind. What do you do with all of those feelings, emotions, pictures and memories in your head? You can write, draw, paint, dance, play music, sing, cook, laugh, any type of creative expression or action will help move those memories and feelings from your mind and body.

Now, here's the cool part: I believe that every type of creative expression is a vibrational highway and how we're feeling or thinking on the inside while we're creating travels on that vibrational highway to the outside world. Sometimes our expressions are just for ourselves, and sometimes they are for others. I believe when we are honest with what we are feeling on the inside, our expressions can help others who are feeling the same way.

I will never forget when a local hospice called me to play harp for a young woman in a nursing home. This woman had listened to my CDs for months and the nurses wanted to surprise her with live music. I sat at her bedside and played the first chord. The waves of love flowing through this musical highway gently surrounded her and made their way into her heart. Something broke open and all of her pent up fears, anxiety, and unspoken feelings rushed to the surface. Her overwhelming cries of release were comforted by two nurses who climbed in bed and held her as if she were a child. I continued to play until she eventually fell asleep.

Using music to help others relax and heal is something I've grown into over the years as my relationship with music transformed from 'performing for the outside' to 'expressing from the inside.' I'll be honest, it took a while to release my need for other people's approval but it became easier as my self-love grew from within.

Loving and accepting all of my harp strings, all of my experiences, thoughts, feelings, fears, joys, everything, as part of the wholeness of who I am, was the key that opened my heart to the music within my soul that I now express and share with the world.


Using music to help others relax and heal is something I've grown into over the years as my relationship with music transformed from 'performing for the outside' to 'expressing from the inside.'

Charlotte Cole | SPEAKER & WRITER

The shock of my life came when I was forty-three and I was diagnosed with stage three rectal cancer. I had a good prognosis, yet to be around in the long run I knew I needed to cease all forms of stressful activity, while I endured the impending series of hard-core radiation, surgery, and chemotherapy. Despite the agony of it all, the treatment seemed to be going smoothly; my husband and four sons, ranging from eight to sixteen, were extremely supportive while I assumed an atypical role in our home.

After the arduous season, I was finally ready to pick up life were I had left off. I was not prepared, however, for what I found. In addition to supporting me, my family had grown independent and made many changes that I was not aware of. I discovered that my children were involved in activities that broke my heart. Feelings of failure consumed me. My despair actually surpassed all the pain that I had experienced the previous year. I felt as though all I could do was breathe. I was ashamed of the situation and of my pain. I wondered if anyone else hurt such that even the very act of breathing is a struggle.



As I listened to the words and melodies my anxious soul was gently soothed.

In many ways I was rescued by music. God used the gifts and talents He'd given others to minister to me. As I listened to the words and melodies my anxious soul was gently soothed. I went from a place of isolation to understanding that I was not alone. People go to great lengths to hide their weaknesses. We all fear what others will think if the depth of our humanness is exposed. Artists appeal to us by illuminating common emotions that we hide. For example, I was ashamed that my pain was so deep that all I could do was breathe; I didn't want to share that weakness with anyone. Yet, when I heard the song "Need You Now (How Many Times)" by Plumb, I felt lifted from my pain.

As I pursue my own calling, in writing and speaking I am driven to excellence. I long to touch lives the way my life has been touched through the gifts of others. I strive to be vulnerable, accurate, and entertaining. I am passionate about encouraging people of all ages who have a vision for the talents God gave them. We all have free will; we can take a risk and share what God has put in our hearts, or hide those gifts and avoid risking rejection. Those who succeed in encouraging others through the passion in their hearts take a leap of faith. They dedicate themselves and make a lasting impression in the hearts of others. Aren't we all thankful for the risks people take in order to share their talents with us so that we might be ministered in the quietness of our hearts?

Ajeet Kaur | SACRED CHANT ARTIST, FLUTIST & SPIRITUAL TEACHER

Art and music have served as the greatest healers, teachers, and therapists in my life. Whether it is journaling, writing music, playing music or visual art, my art brings me closer and closer to the core of my being, to the real essence of who I am. As I see it, the only parts of ourselves that keep us from truly loving and forgiving are the places of fear within us. Art allows us to explore those more vulnerable parts of ourselves, to really go deep into the vast world within, and then to express from a place of real truth when we touch it. Art that doesn't come from that place of truth doesn't hold much power. For me, art comes from a place where love and forgiveness are natural and come with ease, and that's why I like to visit that space as much as possible.

Art and music serve as the greatest healers, teachers, and therapists in my life.



Art and music represent unity. They are languages that communicate through feeling, emotion, and devotion. As a world with so many different traditions, languages, and ways of living, we need art to remind us to live openly. By sharing our messages of hope and love through art and music we put them into a universal language. Art is a reminder of how beautiful it is to do things differently, to be individual. If every song or every painting was the same they would lose their magic. If every person or every culture was the same, the world would lose its beauty as well.

My creative life changes me every day. Being creative requires us to be real with ourselves first. If I am living in a way that isn't true for me, that isn't aligned, then the music I create carries that vibration. My creative life inspires me to keep opening myself, keep exploring my depths, and as I change so does what I create. As I embrace a more creative life with art at the center of it, I have just watched those pressures fall away. Now the most important goal in my life is to live in a way that feels totally true and to let my heart be my compass. My prayer is that by being true to myself it will help others do the same. Uplifting each other is the best gift.



Steven Halpern | AUTHOR & MUSICIAN

Composing and recording the kind of meditative and healing music that I do requires that I get into a deeply relaxed state of being. It's not just a matter of playing the right notes. I need to play from my heart and from my deepest place of peace. To do so means that I open my heart to the vibration of unconditional love. I embody the peace that I wish to share with my listeners. This is something some musicians learn, yet many do not.

The heart has its own wisdom. When you get into the right brainwave state, in deep alpha (8 Hz) or theta range (4-7 Hz) you naturally attune to and synchronize with the dominant energy of the earth itself, which further opens your heart.

A case in point was the recent celebration of the life of Nelson Mandela. The role of music—of singing songs of revolution and social justice—played a central role in the transition from apartheid to freedom for all. It is also the case that music—from folk to rock to R&B to rap—has always been a part of the civil rights movement in this country.

For me, composing and recording the kind of meditative and healing music that I do requires that I get into a deeply relaxed state of being.

On a more theoretical level, research has shown that there are certain biological realities that are hardwired into our nervous system. Some forms of art and music tap into naturally occurring relationships of tone, color, and shape that support harmony and peaceful feelings. Other forms create dissonance and disharmony. Knowing this, you can make wiser choices to bring more uplifting music and art into your life.

When I started out in the music business, I played in bands as a trumpet player and guitarist. I practiced a lot, and there was a lot of ego in showing off how good I was on the bandstand. In other words, the music was about me, rather than the listener.



When I shifted into my role as a sound healer and creator of uplifting, relaxing experiences for the listener, it was no longer just about me or how well I could perform. It was how well the music I recorded assisted the individual in feeling more at peace, more relaxed, and more in touch with their spiritual essence. This is something we all share, at the core of our being. However, it is not something our culture really values or teaches.

Therefore, my creative life transformed my life on many levels. It allowed me the opportunity to touch the hearts and souls of many millions of lives around the world. It allowed me to make a more positive contribution to people worldwide than I had done before. It also allowed me to become part of the community of many artists who seek to uplift our audience as we uplift ourselves with our art.

Susanna Sophia Hart | ARTIST, HEALER & PRIESTESS

Music and art can instantaneously open our hearts! When we are touched by the beauty or the depth of a painting or poem, or are deeply moved by a melody or a song, our hearts just melt open. As our heart opens, memories that we have been holding onto, such as pain, loss, or hurt, surface and are released through our tears and deeper feelings. As we let go of these deeper memories, we open a space for the beauty of the painting, poem, or music to enter and fill us with the light of the vibrational frequency of those colors or sound waves. When we are touched in this exalted way, we naturally heal. Here is where love enters, and where there is love, there is forgiveness. Forgiveness has the capability of opening our hearts to living authentically in the present. For as we forgive, we let go of the chords that are holding that old situation or experience frozen in time. As we let go, the beauty that has been surrounding us connects with our divine beauty within. It is as if the rhythm of our souls, our own inner music, invites us to dance in the flow of universal wonder and grace.



Music and art each touch our souls at the deepest levels of our being. Paintings can open portals into other realms, allowing us to step out of time and space and enter the eternal realm of the soul. Paintings can be guides, unlocking the mystery of our own ascension. Consider, for instance, the image of Christ's rainbow body. Images like this stir our deeper inherent wisdom, sparking our heart fires into holy passion.

While on a vision quest in Sedona during 2008, I was struck by lightning. During my near-death experience I was suddenly catapulted into the most exquisite golden realm of light. The first thing I became aware of was being bathed in the most beautiful angelic music—music that seemed to speak to my soul in such a way as to pierce the very veils of illusion that surround the earth. And here, held within the grace of these most magnificent angels, I was able to reflect upon my life and realize the true meaning of life and what an extraordinary gift life is, so precious and full of promise. As my awareness was filled with this gorgeous music, I was able to see the circle of light, the circle of golden angels that were surrounding me. All at once, I knew that I was home and that the music I was hearing was my soul's song.

My deepest love has been helping people to heal and inspiring people to live their dreams!

Since that day, my life has changed in so many ways. It is as if my soul's song is guiding me in miraculous ways. I think there is value in finding one's soul song and allowing that song to awaken our creative fires from within. From this space of inner knowing, our divine sparks are ignited. When our heart sparks are truly lit from within, this is when the divine whispers in our ears.

I believe that we are all co-creator and artist of our own reality, inherently connected within the matrix of the universal grace of All That Is. You might also call this the "web of life." Each person has been birthed into this life with special gifts, a soul purpose, and the desire to create and recreate his or her life anew. I imagine life to be a beautiful series of living canvases and believe that through our deepest desires and beliefs, we are the artists of our own realities. If you can see it and you can feel it, and you can believe in your dream, universal grace will mirror it back to you in your own reality. Quite literally, the universe will mirror in your life what is within your heart. In my life, I have been able to use this creative medium of visualization with inner will to live my life to the fullest. This has allowed me to try many different things.

In this life I have been a modern jazz and sacred temple dancer, an accomplished equestrian and, without going to college or ever working in an office before, a creative executive at Sony Studios—all through the process of creative visualization and the divine will to follow my dreams with such passion as to draw them into my reality. My deepest love has been helping people to heal and inspiring people to live their dreams! One of the ways that I have found to have the most impact is to have people dance their dreams as if they are living them now. Put on a song that touches your soul, and dance. Really let the music carry you away. Or paint a picture of the life you want to live, of who you are becoming.



I think it is important for us to keep our imaginations alive to all possibilities and for parents to encourage their children to keep that childlike creativity alive and to develop the creative spark of imagination that is within all children, so that they will fully be able to feel and believe that they can live the life they so deeply desire. My own experience of life has taught me, over and over, that dreams really do come true.

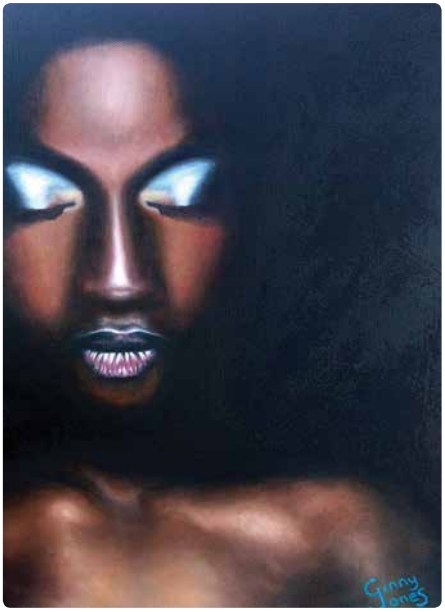


Ginny Jones | ARTIST

Art and music can bring out feelings in an individual. Sometimes these feelings can trigger an emotional release of some sort; whether it is through sadness or laughter, this is good for the soul. Art shows how we can open ourselves to really connect on a deep level with our inner self. This is something that we all should do, for it opens up our heart center and helps us to see and feel things in a very different, healing way. Art and music can trigger a healing process through love and forgiveness—love and forgiveness for others as well as ourselves. This positive transformation that some of us get through art and music, whether we are creating ourselves or looking at and listening to another's creation, could have a profound effect on society. Our hearts open to the feelings that art and music can give, creating positive vibrations.

Finding the freedom of expression through my art has been a wonderful healing journey for me.

Positive art and music really do have a positive effect on the message it communicates with the world—love, good feeling, empathy, happiness, forgiveness, and creativity, just to name just a few. It is these feelings that go with the trigger that art and music have, which is most important. Feeling and expressing these emotions can uplift our vibrations. All positive thought forms



can lift one's spirits to the highest level, which then radiate to those people we are with. This could very well spread out to all people. What a wonderful vibe we would all have, if everyone did this!

I personally have found that creating art and listening to music go hand in hand with each other, depending on what music I may be listening to while painting. It depends on how freely I paint and how the brush strokes flow. I love listening to music while I create. My creativity has had a huge impact on my life. It has opened a whole side of me that I didn't know I had. Finding freedom of expression through my art has been a wonderful healing journey. Art has opened and triggered my true self to be set free. The feelings that I have when I know I have connected on a soul level and created a finished painting are truly amazing.

As an energy healer, I am very sensitive to vibration, and when I have created a painting, when in total touch with my soul, I can feel the vibrations that the paintings give out. Not only are they healing for me, but I know they give out healing energy for others. When someone is drawn to a certain piece, I know it has in some way connected with their soul. To feel this way about how my art has an effect on someone gives me the feeling of love and great satisfaction. I would love everyone to experience this feeling of soul connection through art and music.





Claire Kellerman | ARTIST, ECODESIGNER, SINGER & WRITER

Art is prayer. It allows me to hang out with and explore what hurts, what I love, and to heal the disconnection that separates me from love. Dr. Rev. Michael Bernard Beckwith once said to me, "All forgiveness is self-forgiveness." I see this in my own heart as absolutely true. All I ever wanted was to sing. That was my beacon. I have been an artist in many media, from sewing fabric to building homes and gardens with my own hands, and now 260-acre permaculture community on Maui, Hawaii, HOKU NUI MAUI, LLC. Art and music have saved my life by giving me a reason to live and a way to connect with life in a healthy way.

The words and music continue to wash through me like Pure Love, and it heals me every time I play it on my guitar.

Art, for me, is the surrender to a vision or a curiosity about capturing in form something I feel connected to, or a combination of colors or patterns that I find in nature. I weave gemstone beads, bone, and silver onto leather in KLARITY Stone Tapestry bracelets and chokers. I paint on fabric and wrap myself in my serenity blanket that is as big as a door frame, so it can be a blanket, a sarong, a beach towel, or travel blanket. It allows me a safe, comfortable place to be wrapped in all the beauty and comfort I felt during the hours it took for the colors and memories of special places to be painted and embroidered onto the cloth. I have my godmother's art studio door painted on it, showing her walking up the stairs past an ancient oak tree in Topanga, California, a place I have loved since before I was born. My mother and godmother Rabyn were pregnant at the same time there. I have the Blarney Castle's outline and sprouting grasses in the rock walls from the day I left Ireland last summer. I have a six-foot-tall banyan tree that reminds me that my mother said if I was tree, I'd be a banyan tree. She left me when I was five years old, so her words are treasures, rare, and few. Art allows me to savor the things that make me whole: sitting quietly, listening in the process, and enjoying the beauty that comes from this surrender and allowing when I live with what I've created, or give it away to loved ones, and witness their pleasure and gratitude.

Music is another powerful place for me. On a cellular level, as we listen, as I sing, there is a deep resonance and healing with certain music that lights up and invites the soul to regenerate. That is the music I sing. It repairs all the broken heart-cracks and losses and replaces all the spaces with pure divine love. This is my experience and reality since meeting Ger Lyons and since co-creating with my music partner from 2000 to 2008, Rick Kurek. With Ger Lyons, we listen to music and then share what is stirred up, and the courage it takes to heal is present where massive, infinite loving support has been called in with our ancient invocation, and in our circle. It is medicine, this love that pours into us with music. I wrote "One Drop of Love," a song for my beloved, only to realize in playing it for thirteen years that it is actually more than a song; it is now a well-established healing place. It took me six months to write it, fifteen minutes every night. The words and music continue to wash through me like pure love, and the music heals me every time I play it on my guitar. It also heals others every time they hear it in our Core Transformation and Cellular Healing Workshops with Ger Lyons, and my own Core Clarity healing events around the world.

When I was alone, lost, confused, and hurting from not understanding how to be in this world or in relationships, art and music gave me refuge, and in that refuge my love could shine through. Art and music come from my being nothing except interested in something real, something authentic, something beautiful coming through me. There have been years I could not shake a dark energy that had become a filter in how I saw myself and how I saw the world. It was as if all the trauma, pain of war, genocides, starvation, poverty, and fear had roosted in my heart. I know my soul only wants for these things to dissolve in the world, so I imagine I accepted these things into my field to heal what I could inside me. I accept my responsibility in bringing and being the love I wish to see in the world. It is why I bring my art into the form of earth domes and homes, as taught to me by Nader Khalili since 1993. When I work with the earth in my hands and build a home with a community devoted to cooperation with purpose and care, then I heal and transform. When I bring my artistry to the land, and let nature sing through me, then permaculture design principles are made tangible, and my hope for peace on earth seems logically inevitable, and here, everywhere humans accept and reveal the beauty of their true nature. There is abundance and beauty in nature. I am nature. Art and music bring this back into my awareness, breath and hands, and clear my heart of everything else.





JoyBeth Lufty | AUTHOR, DANCER & HEALER

Sometimes life just hurts. The shadow side of human nature seems to block our light, our love. Negative thoughts and emotions—energies—can tear us apart and leave us feeling all alone. That's when the healing process of forgiveness starts requiring a creative focus in order to change or transform the darkness that blocks us.

The most powerful tools I know of to "dare the dark" and once again stand in the balanced light of life are music, dance, and art. Each has its place in the steps to letting go of that which is dragging us down, and in being able to forgive ourselves and all who are involved.

One daring-the-dark-process that many of us will go through in our life's journey, d-i-v-o-r-c-e or the ending of a committed intimate relationship, is often scarred by betrayal, mistreatment, scandal, distrust, and disrespect. It's quite a load to take on for anyone. I don't know how well I would have survived my own divorce journey if I hadn't used the releasing and rejuvenating or healing powers that are inherent in the arts, which I needed in recreating my life energies and choices.

The healing process of forgiveness starts requiring a creative focus in order to change or transform the darkness that blocks us.

Music helps us to feel quickly and deeply the depth of our emotions. One of the first healing tools I created was a CD of music that enabled me to feel the anger, disillusionment, frustration, sadness, and grief that were clogging my brain and heart. I would sing all the lyrics at the top of my lungs and dance my tutu off in the sweatiest of releases. Over and over again, I explored "the layers of the onion" through music and movement.

Creating art, and sometimes the burning or smashing of it, helped me to release the negative images that haunted my sleep. Then I was able to begin dreaming what I wanted to bring into my life after I released that which was no longer serving me in healthy ways. Painting, sculpting, and writing proved invaluable for me, plus saving me a lot of money from not needing to buy someone else's counseling skills. My art was a therapeutic process I had available to me at home anytime.

As I was able to let go of that which had caused or was causing me pain, the music that I listened to changed from the angry side of rock and roll and the depressed side of the blues and country. I took up African drumming, which helped me in learning to let go and move on in new circles.



My journal writing and painting saved me from my own crazy thoughts and then, through the art of writing poetry, helped me to open up to new perspectives of what I had been through, another huge step in the forgiveness process. To this day, when I get hung up on anything, I dance. I dare my darkness and I dance with it, co-creating new moves, new energies, and opening back up to the light. Yes, forgiveness is all about daring the dark and dancing with it!

Sarah McCleary | AUTHOR

At the age of six, I lost my mother, father, and my only living grandparent in less than a month. My older sister, who was twenty years old at the time, took everything out of our home, leaving me there alone with my clothes and a limited amount of food. A few days later my uncle realized he hadn't seen my sister or me and decided to drive by our home. He found me inside hiding, scared, and everything gone. He took me home with him. I had dinner and a bath and went to bed. A few hours later I heard voices and got up to see what was going on. My uncle had contacted the rest of the family to find out if anyone knew where my older sister was and to discuss my care. I was standing behind the door, listening, when I heard my uncle say that no one wanted to feed and clothe another child. After I had been rejected by the rest of my family, my uncle and his wife decided that I would live with them. I was so young and didn't understand what was going on, but the trauma of it all had a profound impact on my life.

Music played a key role in my healing, building self-esteem, and spiritual growth. I'll never forget the ten-hour drive I took for a high school graduation. I took several CDs with me, and as I listened to "Imagine Me" by Kirk Franklin, God used the words of the song to heal deep wounds that I had experienced for years. I drove and cried. By the time I reached my destination, I was no longer the same. I could feel a weight that had held me down, lifted. I began to see myself in a different way.

Music played a key role in my healing, building self-esteem, and spiritual growth.

Through gospel music, film and art, artists share personal testimonies and the word of God. Their stories give us hope and provide strength and encouragement. Films such as "The Passion of the Christ" transform the Bible into life. The vision of what Jesus went through at the whipping post scene makes it hard not to "Choose to Forgive, and Learn to Love." After all he went through, Jesus asked the father to forgive. So after thirty-seven years, I reached out to the sister who walked away from me as a child. Through the testimony of song and the power of pictures, I was able to forgive and meet my sister with an open heart.



Life is full of ups and downs. No one is immune to its challenges, and each trail is an opportunity to learn and draw closer to God. So when you're feeling down, remember to praise your way through. Find a song that can speak to your heart, bring you peace, and deepen your faith.

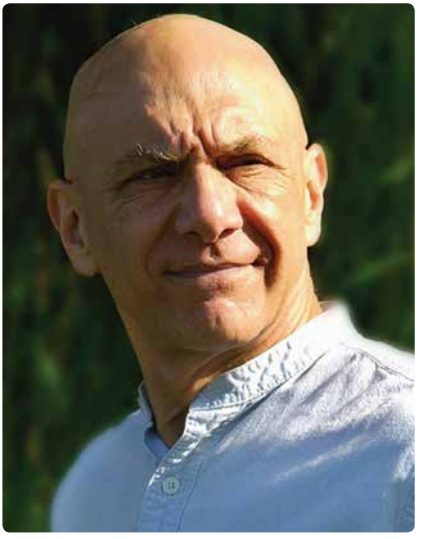
Bernie Siegel | AUTHOR & SPEAKER

When one creates art or music, one loses track of time and enters a trance state that heals the body and the mind. One cannot experience pain or disease when one is in this state. I know this from my experience as a surgeon and artist. Playing music in the operating room helped everyone to heal. The patient experienced less pain, fewer drugs were needed, and the operation finished in less time. When one enters a trance state, the past doesn't exist, and so love and forgiveness are the result, as well as freedom from fear.

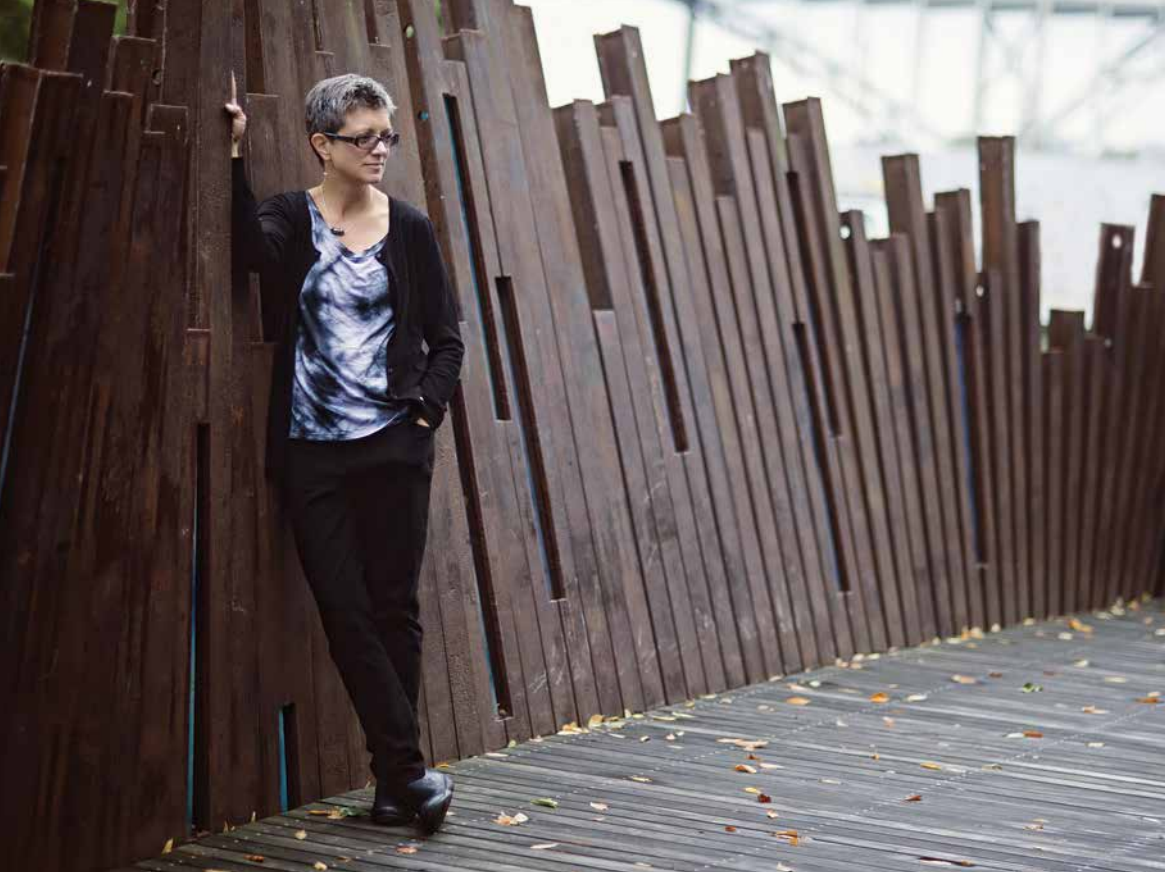
Art and music connect us with creation and our creator. The rhythm and harmony of music and art help us to heal, find tranquility, and meditate so that we reach a state where we are connected with the loving, intelligent, conscious energy of creation.

When one creates art or music, one loses track of time, and enters a trance state that heals the body and the mind.

As an artist, I learned to see the truth through my paintings and the dreams and drawings of my patients. I painted myself as a surgeon completely covered with cap, mask, and gown at a time in my life when I needed to uncover my spirituality and be free of the pain I experienced as a surgeon who couldn't cure and fix everything. I ended up shaving my head and ultimately realized that, like the monks, I needed to uncover my spirituality and not just the skin of my head. My painting taught me a great deal and awakened me to the truth. The unconscious speaks to us in dreams and drawings. That is the art of creation and how our body and soul communicate with the creator of life.







Naseem Rakha | AUTHOR, SPEAKER & STORYTELLER

If there is a god, I believe it communicates through music. The dulcet sounds of a piano, the rapture of a choir, the earthshaking beat of tympani or the cacophony of an orchestra. Bird song, too. And the wind. And all our attempts as wee-humans to mimic it all, and sometimes come close and sometimes go further, and all of the time reach for something that can move the heart and soul to a greater understanding of who we are and what we can be. And in this journey of reaching for the sound, the music, the voice, we find the only path is through the onrush of love and the full rush of forgiveness. Music, well done, with intention and caprice, can be a light guiding us into ourselves and leading us back out more whole.

For me, music is human's most generous and healing gift. It communicates across borders and touches people no matter what their faith, sex, language, race. I think of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony and how this one piece of music has moved millions to tears and a stunned supplication as choirs sing to the joy of being human. Leonard Bernstein played the Ninth in tribute to the end of the Cold War; mothers would sing the Chorale of the Ninth outside the walls of Pinochet's prisons, defying tyranny and risking death. Throughout the world, musicians are showing up in plazas and railroad stations, surprising and delighting onlookers with impromptu performances of this grand piece of music.





And in those plazas we find peace, joy, camaraderie, love, and a precious and uncompromising beauty. I know cruel things occur in places of beauty: the Killing Fields of Cambodia, The Trail of Tears, the mass graves found in Bosnia, Poland, Russia, and the Ukraine. Music may be a way—a passage—a common plane we can walk on with bare arms raised in appreciation versus anger.

We find the only path is through the onrush of love, and the full rush of forgiveness

For me, there is no creative life or noncreative life. There is just life, and each day I create what I can of it. Sometimes what I create delights me, sometimes it depresses me, but all the time the values that are expressed are in transition and are fed by what I do and witness and hear and feel. My creative life as a writer has given me a deeper appreciation of the value of music and words, and the power of both. My creative life as a mother has transformed my appreciation of human life and has given me new definitions for words like success and happiness and time and love. And my creative life as a naturalist has given me a fine respect for the very finite thing we call life.



Suzanne Tick | ARTIST & WEAVER

Through a deep concentration in psychotherapy and creative weaving practice, I have learned to untangle the threads that have bound my heart—the threads that have strangled love from emerging. While slowly untangling the binding plies of fear/terror, anxiety/worry, sleep/sadness, addiction/annihilation, my soul, like winter soil thawing out in the spring, began to become aware of love and compassion. The ritual of using my hands and the repetitive practice of weaving created a space for transformation to occur. Hours at the loom are my meditation.

My soul, like winter soil thawing out in the spring, began to become aware of love and compassion.

My most recent works, in the series called "Pulp Fiction," are woven from my shredded divorce documents. The process of rereading and shredding net worth statements, deposition papers, and final documents, then plying the paper—eight strands at a time—and weaving them back together to create a piece of beauty started the reconciliation required for forgiving myself and others, finding love for myself and others. Without this art practice I would have found it very difficult to relax into this transformation.

Creativity cures sickness. Connectivity with oneself and community is paramount. Culturally we have come together to strum and drum, knit and sew, build and paint, sing and pray, view and purchase. When we hold that spirit together, it creates a forum of worth, usefulness, motivation, and sharing. It breaks down the barriers of isolation, frustration, anger, and contempt. Art and music open up the heart for all communities, villages, and cities around the world. In sharing my love for weaving I give classes to designers and students to help inspire their creative juices.





Being creative is extremely humbling. In order to succeed you have to experience failure over and over. While going through the process of failure, I recognized how I imprisoned myself and everyone around me, blaming and criticizing, fearing the worst in myself, and judging others. When mistakes would happen, I would implode. That impact of sheer pain that I put myself and others though crystallized with the breakthrough of my personal weaving practice.

I was so out of balance. The overthinking, overreacting, churning created disturbances everywhere. In becoming aware of the beauty of my creations, in juxtaposition of my behavior in hard times, I began to reflect on what it would feel like if I flipped the negative emotions to a positive emotion. I became aware of the beauty in the people I was surrounded by, their talent, their humor, their creativity. It transformed my outlook on life. My work with humble materials reflects the fact that beauty comes from within.



This work was woven from 4800 dry cleaning hangers, and measures 8 feet high by 13 feet wide. It's called "Refuse DC."

Application

Q: Does art make you more compassionate? Why?

Q: What kind of art or music has had a healing effect on you?

Q: How would you describe this healing experience to others?



Transformation


LOVE
LIVE
FORGIVE

Art embodies potential, especially when the art provides a spiritual signpost, rising above the ordinary and reaching towards the extraordinary. Artists are often sensitive to and have heightened awareness of the transformative power inherent in their art and the art of others. The beauty in art and music can become a powerful catalyst that sparks an inner transformation. This shift in the inner spirit can have outward effects that cause us to become more loving, compassionate, and forgiving. Art then becomes a change agent for a paradigm shift, where our beliefs, opinions, and perspectives on the world can be redefined and reshaped. A positive transformation from ordinary to extraordinary often leaves us changed with a new outlook on life. Art stimulates this transformative response.

When art points us to love and forgiveness, we are being exposed to spiritual values and virtues that can become personal. That is why the themes of love and forgiveness are so potent in their power, as they compel us to look into our inner world, and create an expression which is outwardly focused. This is a transformative experience, especially when our inner world positively influences our outer world. It is during this season of transformation where we can begin to see our lives moving from me, to we, to world. This empowers us to be the change we want to see in the world.

Transformation requires a trigger, and in this chapter we learn from musical producer Glenda Benevides how the DNA of our hearts "allows for transformation and goes deep into our soul, it lodges itself in our body, mind, and spirit, forever." Pianist David Lanz suggests that "for the listener, the opportunity to transform negative or upsetting feelings exists" with music. Composer and pianist Michael Jones calls this "transforming moments of fear and isolation into forgiveness and love."

Reflection

Q: In what ways have artists been transformed by their own creative process?

Q: How has this transformed their worldview?

Q: How has art encouraged their audiences to experience transformation?

Glenda Benevides | MUSICAL PRODUCER

We all grow and evolve, whether we see it, believe it, want it or not. I think artists of all genres are usually looking for answers or are reflecting in some way on why they and other people do things. As a songwriter, I believe we are all bards on a mission. We are looking to solve problems, ask questions, and, we hope, evolve. The power of love and forgiveness itself comes from "owning" your own power to love and forgive yourself first. This is the quest to transform the way we see all things in life. Life will always present challenges, so I see negative experiences always as an opportunity to transform something about myself; then I can share that painful challenge as an insight with others, using specific words and the emotion to convey the honest message. This introspection always takes me deeper into my own life and allows my honesty to shine through.



I've seen that setting forth a specific intention when writing my songs always creates a strength in the foundation, one that allows me to sit inside a realm of a focused world, bringing a deeply emotional and real tone to a song. This type of writing experience can create real magic. I know that when I am moved by a song, it means that the artist has taken me on a multidimensional journey. They have told me their truth, their raw perspective, and shared their life. This gives me an opportunity to see through a new window that can leave me open to connect with me, how I feel, what I think and what I might believe about a situation. I am then left with an experience that has changed my life forever in some way.

Why do we remember songs and their lyrics? I believe music attaches its DNA to our hearts and connects to our life, causing a shift at the cellular level. We are then in the healing journey of a song, even if it is for just one moment. This power allows transformation and goes deep into our soul; it lodges itself in our body, mind, and spirit, forever. This musical artistic journey heals, and, like magic, it leads us through to love and forgiveness.

This power allows for transformation and goes deep into our soul, it lodges itself in our body, mind, and spirit, forever.

John Chen | CONCERT PIANIST & ASSISTANT LECTURER

One composer I particularly admire is Johann Sebastian Bach, who wrote all of his music to the glory of God, which is also my goal in my capacity as a performer of music. I find that he understands and communicates ideas central to the Christian faith so well. You can hear in his music themes such as contentment in the sufficiency of Christ, the humble grief of repentance, or the reassurance of God's mercy and forgiveness, just to name a few. Bach's music communicates so well about God, and can inspire us to experience God's character in a deeper way, thus transforming our capacity to love and forgive.



During World War II, French composer Olivier Messiaen was taken captive by the Germans and interned in a prisoner of war camp. During his time there, he composed a work titled Quatuor pour la fin du temps (Quartet for the End of Time) and premiered it with other musicians in the camp at the time. While much of the music depicts the devastation going on around him, there are two beautiful sections of the piece, one of which is titled "Louange ŕ l'Éternité de Jésus (Praise to the Eternity of Jesus)" and "Louange ŕ l'immortalité de Jésus (Praise to the Immortality of Jesus)." It is truly inspiring to hear the music of someone who understood deeply what life is all about and who communicated this through his music. Even when the world around him was going to pieces, the only thing of truly everlasting value was to praise the name of Jesus. This work has become essential to the 20th century repertoire and has inspired countless numbers of musicians and music-lovers for the past seventy years.

My personal values have transformed my creative life. I want to give glory to God through my life, not only in regard to myself as a musician, but also in all of my other activities. For musicians, there is often an obsession with making a career and reaching the pinnacle of success. I aim to work at my music diligently and faithfully to God's glory, rather than trying to be the best musician I can be.

My personal values have transformed my creative life.



Jennifer Kloetzel | CELLIST & FOUNDING MEMBER, CYPRESS STRING QUARTET

Music is powerful and can be transformative, for both performers and audience members. I have experienced this from both sides. I began playing the cello when I was six years old; I heard my first cello when I was five and was completely taken with the lovely, rich sound. I begged for a year to play it, and my parents finally gave in. Cello has been a huge part of my life since then, and I decided to make a career playing music. In 1996 I moved to San Francisco to found the Cypress String Quartet, and that is how I make my living and my life. Playing music is an act of devotion. How it feels to play changes daily, but it is a discipline, and so I commit to do the work. Pushing through the difficult times, the times when it is "too hard" or when someone doesn't "like" what I've done is a vital part of the process of making music from a deep and truthful place. I know in those times that I am working to bring something greater than my own self into the world. When I play music, I am transported to a new place. There is love in that—love of music, love of sound, love of ideas. There is also forgiveness—there has to be. Performing can be difficult, and there is a lot of "self-forgiveness" in performance, when I must be in the moment, on the stage, letting go of perfection. Forgiving myself for being "human."

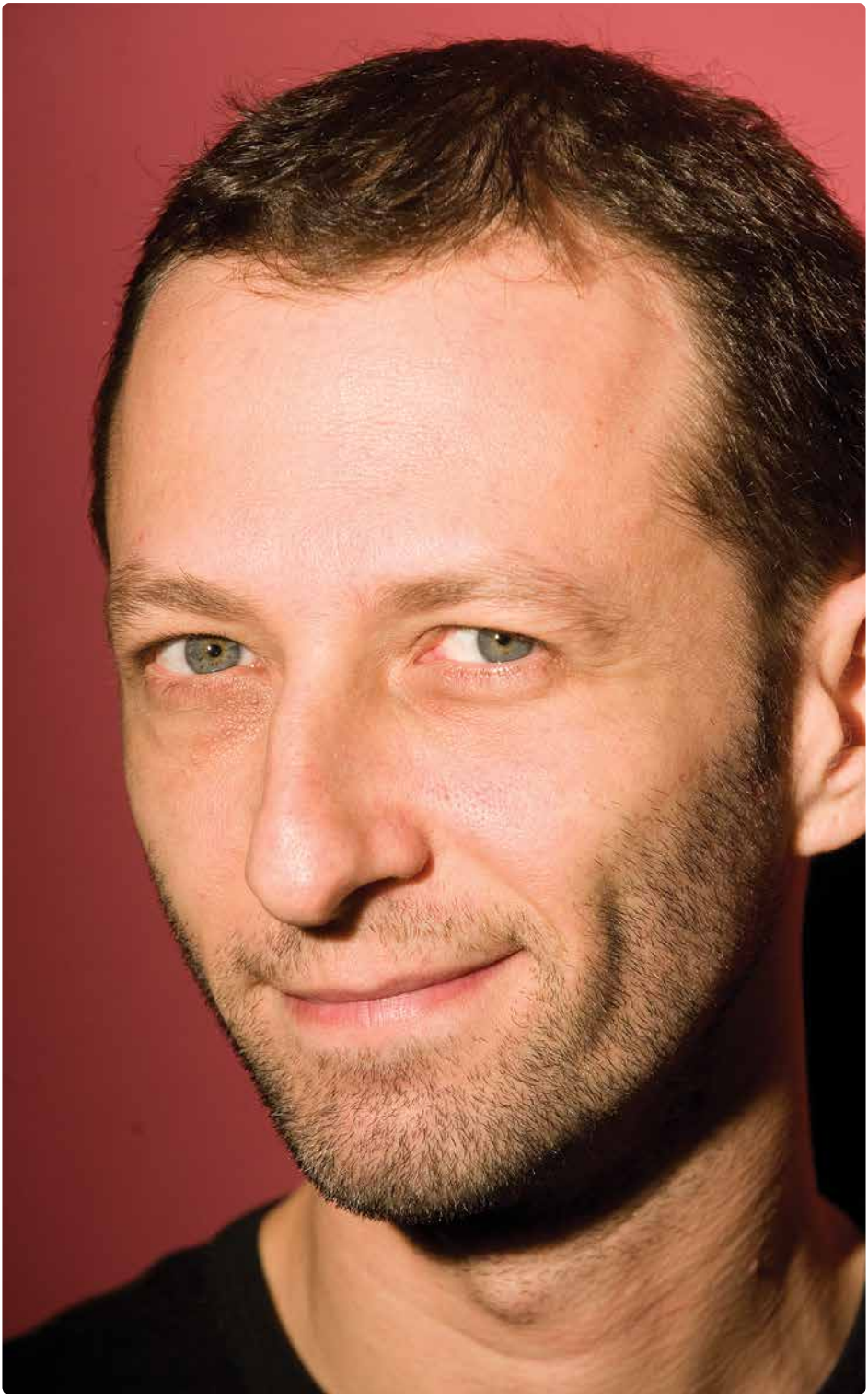
Sharing music is an act of love. Putting yourself, your thoughts, your feelings, where you are in that particular moment out there on stage for people to hear, see, and comment on, is filled with a kind of trust and also a kind of truth. In that sharing, there is an experience for audience members to have, if they are open to it. Sitting in a concert hall allows us the space to reflect and feel. I see this in almost every performance I give, and I feel it when I attend performances myself. Often the quartet is fortunate enough to receive direct feedback from audience members, as was the case when we received a beautiful letter from a woman in Sitka, Alaska. She wrote to us how much our Beethoven performance meant to her, and what a privilege it was to be in the audience. Then she shared what happened to her during the concert: "I was somehow transcended into (Beethoven's) sorrow… I've never experienced this kind of emotional response during twenty-eight years of attending performances… [your performance] quite unexpectedly allowed me to grieve [for the death of a family member] in a healing sort of way, through Beethoven's gift of music, and your fabulous talents."

Music is powerful and can be transformative, for both performers and audience members.

It is rewarding and inspiring to help people connect to their own personal experiences in music, and reading a reaction such as this restores my faith in the value of my work and of the place of music in the world.







Ferdinando Buscema | MAGIC EXPERIENCE DESIGNER

I believe that the arts can stimulate the evolution of human beings in very mysterious and peculiar ways. When art is imbued with intentions and purpose, that's when it becomes a change agent—psychologically, culturally, and socially.

Among the arts, music has long been considered to be a very magical one. The Latin, as well as the Italian, word for "singing" is "cantare," which carries the additional meaning of "incantare." meaning "to cast a magic spell." So music is a very powerful form of enchantment in its own right.

In this regard, I'm reminded of how Timothy Leary described the Beatles, one of the most important music phenomena of the last century, declaring them "prototypes of evolutionary agents sent by God, endowed with a mysterious power to create a new human species, a young race of laughing freemen." I believe that the implications of such an idea are pretty far-reaching even today. So I believe it is crucial for artists and musicians to be aware of and responsible for the kind of signals they are capable of broadcasting.

A work of art or a piece of music is a tool to induce an aesthetic experience in an audience, and the effects of such aesthetic experiences can range from the amusing and entertaining to the downright transformative.

To provide you with an analogy, if the telescope is a tool to see distant stars and galaxies, and the microscope is a tool to see in the world of atoms, the arts provide the lenses to see beyond the mundane and the ordinary, to appreciate the complexity and richness of reality and being. Arts take us out of ourselves, to experience beauty. Ultimately, art and music are portals to divine moments of truth.

I'm a magician, and much of my creative life is focused on the creation and performance of magic. I try to use the art of magic as a portal to explore the mysteries of consciousness, the nature of perception, the spells of language, and the cosmic power of astonishment. In other words, I try to use illusions to provoke reflection on how we see and interpret the world, celebrating with my audience the limits of our everyday understanding of reality, in an entertaining and amusing way.

A work of art, and a piece of music, is a tool to induce an aesthetic experience in an audience, and the effects of such aesthetic experiences can range from the amusing and entertaining to the downright transformative.

My field of interest forced me to come to terms with the idea of reality. I haven't reached any definite conclusions, yet! I guess that by now, I would say this, inspired by Robert Anton Wilson, that "reality is what you can get away with." So ultimately I'd say that my "magic explorations" of reality lead me to appreciate that there is much more than meets the eye.



Hans Christian | CELLIST, MUSICIAN & PRODUCER

Music has been a powerful transformational tool in my life ever since I first took up the cello at an early age. But what exactly is being transformed, and how? Well, I noticed that as soon as I picked up the bow and started to draw it across the string, an internal shift occurred, and still occurs: a fusion of opposites into singularity, a melting of jagged edges into wholeness, a single-minded state where creator and observer become one. This transforming has often left me deeply moved, with a profound sense of releasing inner blocks, judgments, and tensions.

Through the years and decades I have probed through improvisation into deeper layers of my inner world, starting with a single note, a single melody, and a single phrase, repeating, repeating, and again repeating to create a flow that slowly transforms the critical mind into the magical mind. Player and instrument become one in these moments, and a deep heart opening occurs. This is the key to the whole process. Does it open our heart or not? Do we have moments of transformation when we play? These key moments have defined my musical expression and have been captured on several live CDs that I recorded during my artist in residency with Wisdom University in Chartres, France, between 2008 and 2012.

Sancta Camisia (Allemande Music, 2008) was recorded in the Chartres Cathedral on solo cello, in the crypt underneath the cathedral, and in a chapel adjacent to the cathedral. The experience of playing in these profound places,



with their amazing acoustics, was so deep, so sacred, and so honest, that I decided to release the material as a CD.

Undefended Heart and All Is Well (Allemande Music, 2010 and 2011) are two more CDs that were recorded in Chartres at a conference center, formerly a monastery next to the cathedral. I employed a technique called "live looping," where I was selectively recording music phrases into a loop device and layering musical phrases to create repetitive but organically flowing textures and harmonies. It was completely improvised and offered as a daily morning meditation for a retreat. This music was not only a profound experience for me to bring forth, but also for the listeners to experience. Somehow our sense of individuality was expanded into a collective consciousness of love and appreciation of each other without judgment or limitation during these musical moments. So I know that music can have these effects on our emotional bodies.

Music has been a powerful transformational tool in my life.

As a producer I encourage artists to reflect on their artistic choices: Are you finding your own authentic voice or are you emulating what has been done before? If you find your own unique non-egoic expression, you are in the flow of divinity, of magical creativity. Audiences will resonate with your experience, whether it is onstage, on video, or on a recording, and you will become a true healer with your craft.

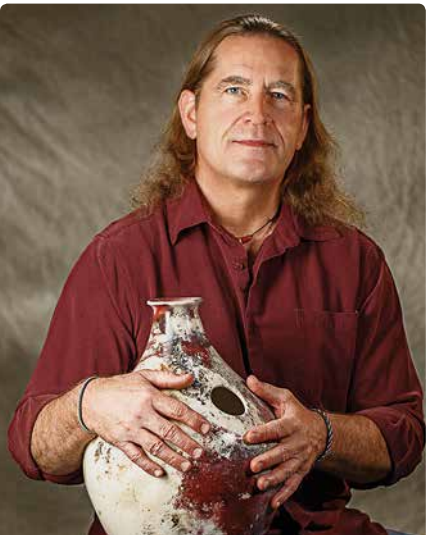
Will Clipman | ARTIST, POET & MUSICIAN

As Buddy Rich famously said, "Music is love." Encoded in that deceptively simple statement from one of the great drum masters of all time are many subtle messages about the drum as the heartbeat of life, and rhythm as the heart and soul of music. As a drummer and percussionist, I am constantly reminded in the reactions of my live audiences and in the correspondence I receive from listeners to my recorded work that music—particularly the genre of rhythm-sensitive global native fusion music in which I specialise—has a very real capacity to transform suffering, trauma, and illness into love, forgiveness, and healing. This is accomplished through the skilful application of positive, harmonious vibrations of acoustic percussion instruments to bodies, minds, and spirits that have been knocked out of harmony with themselves and with the universe. I know this is true—it happens without fail every time I play!

[Music] has a very real capacity to transform suffering, trauma, and illness into and love, forgiveness, and healing.

Music is a discipline. No professional musician has ever been successful over a substantial span of time without self-sacrifice, commitment, passion, patience, and perseverance. If everyone in the world applied these positive values to whatever it is they do, can you imagine how much more peaceful, abundant, and functional our world would be? No one would have time for greed, violence, or thoughtlessness! Musicians make this an attractive paradigm in the general culture because we appear to be having so much fun doing what we do—everybody wants to be near that, to experience that, to find a way to have that much fun and still be productive and make a living, don't they? So musicians—I daresay percussionists in particular—are living instruments of the positive values to which all people consciously or unconsciously aspire, and communicate these values in a universal language beyond the politics of the spoken word.

I started playing drums and piano when I was three years old. I went downstairs into the basement of our family home, climbed up on the throne of my father's drum set, and hit the ride tom. That vibration went through my body and rearranged my molecular structure. I knew at that moment that I wanted to have that feeling for the rest of my life! The task then became to cultivate a skill set and a value system that would empower me to work through many years of struggle to get to the point where I could begin making a living doing what I love and sharing my passion with the world. I played my first professional gig at fourteen, and a half-century later I am still learning my craft and refining my skill set and value system to continue to move forward in a good way along my chosen path.



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Joseph Dispenza | AUTHOR & SPIRITUAL COUNSELOR

I just finished writing a novella, the theme of which is forgiveness. An American missionary nun, caught in crossfire between opposing forces in the civil war that ravages a Central American country, writes a long letter to her sister, also a nun and her Mother Superior, in the United States. All through the writing of *The Passion of Sister Barbara*, I had been listening to music.



Music plays on my Internet radio all the time I am writing. I listen to two types of music—opera and Sinatra, what's been called recently "The Great American Songbook." Both are classic in their categories. Both give me enormous support for my work, encouraging me to do my best. I can't imagine writing an essay, an article, or a book without having music playing. I write with my headphones on.

From opera I get the surging emotions of heightened dramatic moments: love, death, passion, fear, and triumph. It is over-the-top in its depiction of crisis, despair, longing, and all the other great human moods that move our lives. It pushes me to explore those deep regions where we begin to approach an understanding of who we are, why we are here, and where we are going. What could be more wrenching than the end of *Madame Butterfly*, when the Japanese heroine at last discovers, in a crushing blow, that her American husband has forsaken her and married a "proper" American wife?

Dwelling as it does in the world of spirit, music has the capacity to transform and inspire.

Sinatra and his type of music—Tony Bennett, Ella Fitzgerald, Sarah Vaughn, Bobby Darin, Dean Martin, and the rest—bring the lyricism that pushes me toward the poetic. There is something very profound at the heart of much of this music. Think of all the emotional meanings layered onto the simple phrase, "My Funny Valentine" or "Little Girl Blue."

Music is the language of the soul. It communicates at a spiritual level. When we hear music, we are literally tuned into our own spiritual nature. When that happens, a whole world of love and forgiveness is opened to us.

Dwelling as it does in the world of spirit, music has the capacity to transform and inspire. I am writing this in Chiang Mai, Thailand, where last night I attended a show put on by Thai teens, celebrating the life and music of Michael Jackson. Imagine! Years after his death and on the other side of the planet, his life-loving music and dance go on, bringing joy and healing to people.

All art, and especially music, has informed my values throughout my life. When I hear a surging symphony or a soaring opera—or listen to a gifted jazz band play one of my favorite melodies—I am inspired to do my best work. Not only that, but I am moved to be my best self.

Eliana Gilad | AUTHOR, COMPOSER & VOCALIST

Art and music can help transform the capacity to love and forgive by enabling us to connect with others, particularly with music. When we're making music together there's a synergy that happens. There is a connection that occurs, and it requires communication skills. We need to listen to the other person; we need to be listening to ourselves, and allowing each one of those voices to be expressed.

The other way that music can transform the capacity to love and forgive is that it helps us deal with the unspeakable—deal with difficult emotions ,because music and art go beyond the intellect and connect us to a higher state of mind. It's really at our deepest level, our soul, and when we touch that space and we create from that space, it is empowering and can be true, true healing.

Art and music can help transform the capacity to love and forgive by enabling us to connect with others.

When we connect to the essence of our being, we are in service to art and in service to the creation. Instead of being the creator, when we allow the creation to come through us and we express it, then we are a true expression of the divine. Each and every one of our voices is different; yet together they form a unified whole, and they come from a unified whole.



When we use art or music from that place in our souls, it enables us to communicate something much more powerful, much more creative than our cognitive minds are able to communicate. It empowers us, it empowers other people, we get along better with people and we can find solutions to all kinds of problems.

I'm not perfect, and that's one of the ways that my creative life has transformed my world, in helping me have more confidence, helping me feel valued and valuable just as I am, imperfectly perfectly me. My creative life has connected me to my inner truth, to that place that's beyond my mind. If I just go with my mind, oh, boy, that's not a pretty story! There's a lot of negativity there. Yet connecting to the essence of my creativity and being an instrument of that creativity and expressing that through my voice, has enabled me to develop self-confidence and an ability to express that spark of the divine in the world. This has also enabled me to connect with other people in a way that I would not be able to do if I were just speaking from my intellect or my cognitive mind.

I wish you great, great joy and fulfilment in using art and music as a means for love and forgiveness in your world. Your voice truly makes a difference.

Maya & Sage Knowles | MULTI-INSTRUMENTALISTS

Life can be complicated, not a fairy tale promise of happily ever after. It is often hard won, running in cycles of intense love and heartbreak, and allowing life to bring you to your knees over and over. Within these folds of life, we find endless ways to creatively express. It is our creative expression, and the deep experience of the creative works of others, that brings us back to our feet.

By entering the zone of creativity, we are transported to a place where all things are possible and transformation can happen. New routes are opened to love, empathy, and forgiveness. The products of the creative person express the love, pain, struggle, and victory of life. Art reminds us of how we can not only survive our life lessons, but also learn from them. This is the power of the arts. From our experience we bring personal glimpses of reality and connection. We put that in a form to lift us up and help us remember. The art is then there as a legacy to transmit energy from art's source beyond time and space.

Art contributes to the world when it comes from seeing the light and seeing the right in life's growing pains. When we can stir something deep within, we can bravely feel life. We can feel all the ups and downs without getting stuck. We can express life; we can share the raw truth in a creative form that lifts humanity. By expressing what we go through, by capturing the jewel in the deepest pain and the sparks in the greatest joy, by bringing something to the world that is beyond our normal perception, we touch the very magic of life.



A challenging part of the creative life is the need to share and be seen and received and adored. This is certainly a transformative experience, because many artists are never seen or heard, few are adored, and often we crumble from the slightest negative remark about our art. To find the inner strength to create anyway, for the sake of our own life, is key. The less we have to go down to create, the less we need name or fame, the more new levels and heights of love and expansion can be discovered and expressed. This is the next frontier in art: capturing the triumphs of the spirit, in higher love, in higher longing, and bringing that timeless reality into creative form.

By entering the zone of creativity, we are transported to a place where all things are possible and transformation can happen.



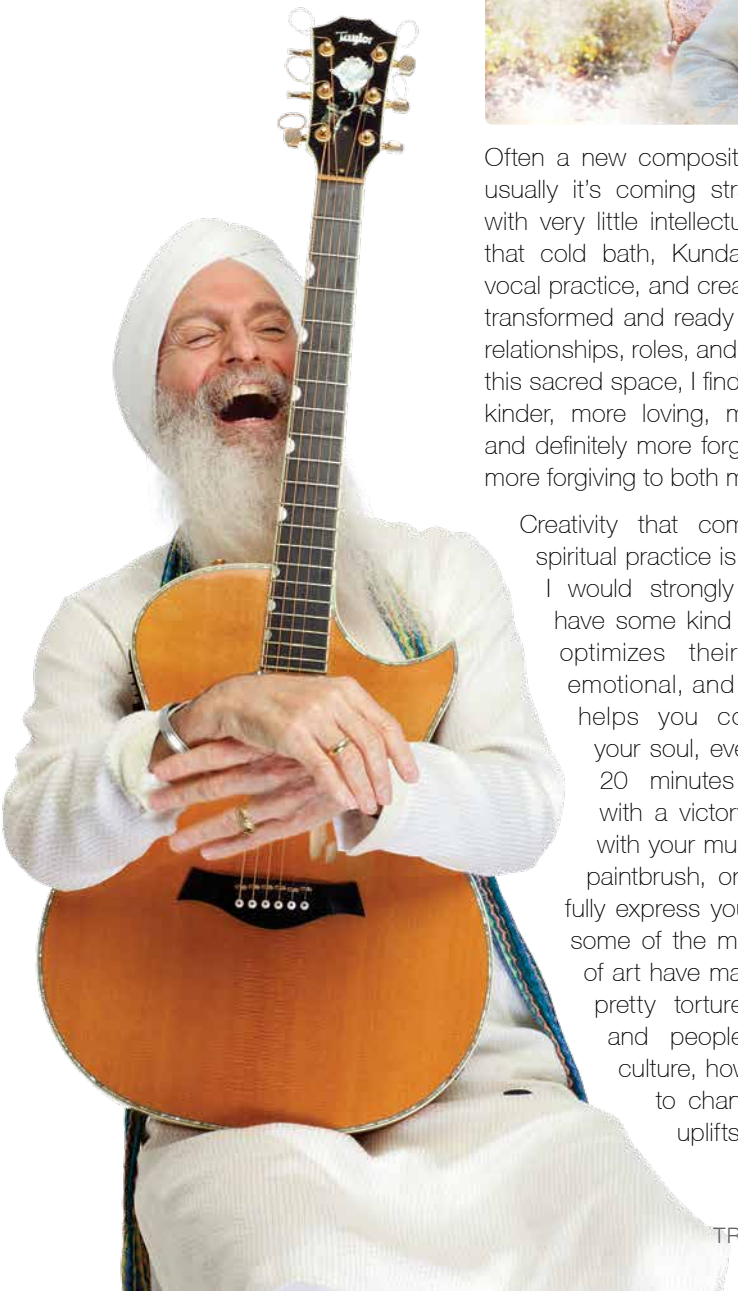
GuruGanesha | GUITARIST & MUSICIAN

My experience is that the best music bypasses the intellect and goes straight to the heart. For music to have that ability, the intention behind the music has to be right. If the intention of the composer/artist is to touch and uplift, that will come through, and a good percentage of the listeners will feel energy at their heart center. Within the heart is where all our best character attributes reside. That's where a wealth of compassion and forgiveness is contained, where we're not afraid, where we have a consistent loving awareness, and where we trust the universe. When we are in that lovely place, we are confident that all our affairs will be arranged. We're in touch with our divine self.

I feel transformed and ready to enter into the world of relationships, roles, and responsibilities.

I have a daily spiritual practice. It starts with a cold bath followed by a half hour of really strenuous Kundalini yoga, followed by vocal warmups from the classical Indian raga tradition that are very meditative. I chant really low notes for long periods of time and then start to gradually work my way up the octaves while concentrating on moving the energy upward. Once I've really got everything going in terms of the physical body, and once I've got my emotions calmed down from the chanting, I pull out my guitar, start singing, and let my creativity fly. Inevitably, if I've been fully present for my practice, all sorts of wonderful things will start flowing from that sacred space.





Often a new composition will emerge, and usually it's coming straight from my heart with very little intellectual involvement. After that cold bath, Kundalini yoga, meditative vocal practice, and creative expression, I feel transformed and ready to enter the world of relationships, roles, and responsibilities. From this sacred space, I find myself to be a much kinder, more loving, more compassionate, and definitely more forgiving human being—more forgiving to both myself and others.

Creativity that comes out of a daily spiritual practice is usually very uplifting. I would strongly urge all people to have some kind of daily practice that optimizes their physical, mental/emotional, and spiritual health. This helps you connect deeply with your soul, even if it's just for 15 to 20 minutes daily. Start your day with a victory and then sit down with your musical instrument, your paintbrush, or whatever helps you fully express your soul. It is true that some of the most incredible pieces of art have manifested out of some pretty tortured spaces. For me and people in the alternative culture, however, we are looking to channel art that inspires, uplifts, and opens hearts.



Joseph Israel | MUSICIAN & VOCALIST

Music is a catalyst for change and has always been a way to communicate new ideas that transform the world we live in. Music's healing sounds open up the mind and heart to perceive beyond the normal scope of the limited vision of our conditioned mind. Coming from the heart, the musician is able to connect with the heart of the listener and so this moves the experience up to a higher spiritual connection and experience. It is through this heart-to-heart connection that the door for true communication and transformation is opened. This is the power of the gift of music.

Music is a catalyst for change and has always been a way to communicate new ideas that transform the world we live in.

Looking at the world today we can easily see that people are suffering from disease, war, malnutrition, and economic despair. The planet Earth is suffering from pollution and deforestation. These conditions seem to be getting worse all the time. We are at a time that we as a planet are crying out for healing,

for transformation, for a change. It is at this unique time faced with all these global challenges that we also have the ability to communicate worldwide. this can and will only bring all people closer together. There is no doubt that there have been many wrongs and horrible things perpetrated on the people by governments, corporations, and even in the name of religions. This has caused a division, walls to be put up, keeping people divided. This is where the power of music comes in.

As an artist myself I can see the problems we all face and I hope to see and be a part of the change. I strive to communicate this hope through songs. The ability to forgive and to love is a gift from YHWH the almighty creator. It is essential to our future; it can and will be accomplished. The human race was made to love and be loved. Many times I find myself feeling concern about the struggle we are facing in this world of lies, injustice, and oppression. Though it is hard to explain this feeling, I can write a song about it. Without running from the problems we all face, and with music as one vehicle, we can rise to a higher place of universal love, hope, and forgiveness. The truth is that none of us is perfect and we all need forgiveness. It is with love and forgiveness that healing will come. The walls of division will fall, and we can begin to work on solutions and a better way. We can make the change.

These values have deeply affected my life, and as I continue to grow as a person and an artist, compassion and thankfulness are constantly increasing within me and the music. It is my hope that with conscious focus and the healing power of music, we can address the serious and urgent issues of the day, and at the same time remove all fear and anxiety about the future to instil the hope of the good things to come. We have the power to love, and the choice is ours to forgive. Let us remember the blessed truth that "God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him." May these words be impressed upon our heart and true peace on earth prevail among all people of good will. One Love and Shalom to all!

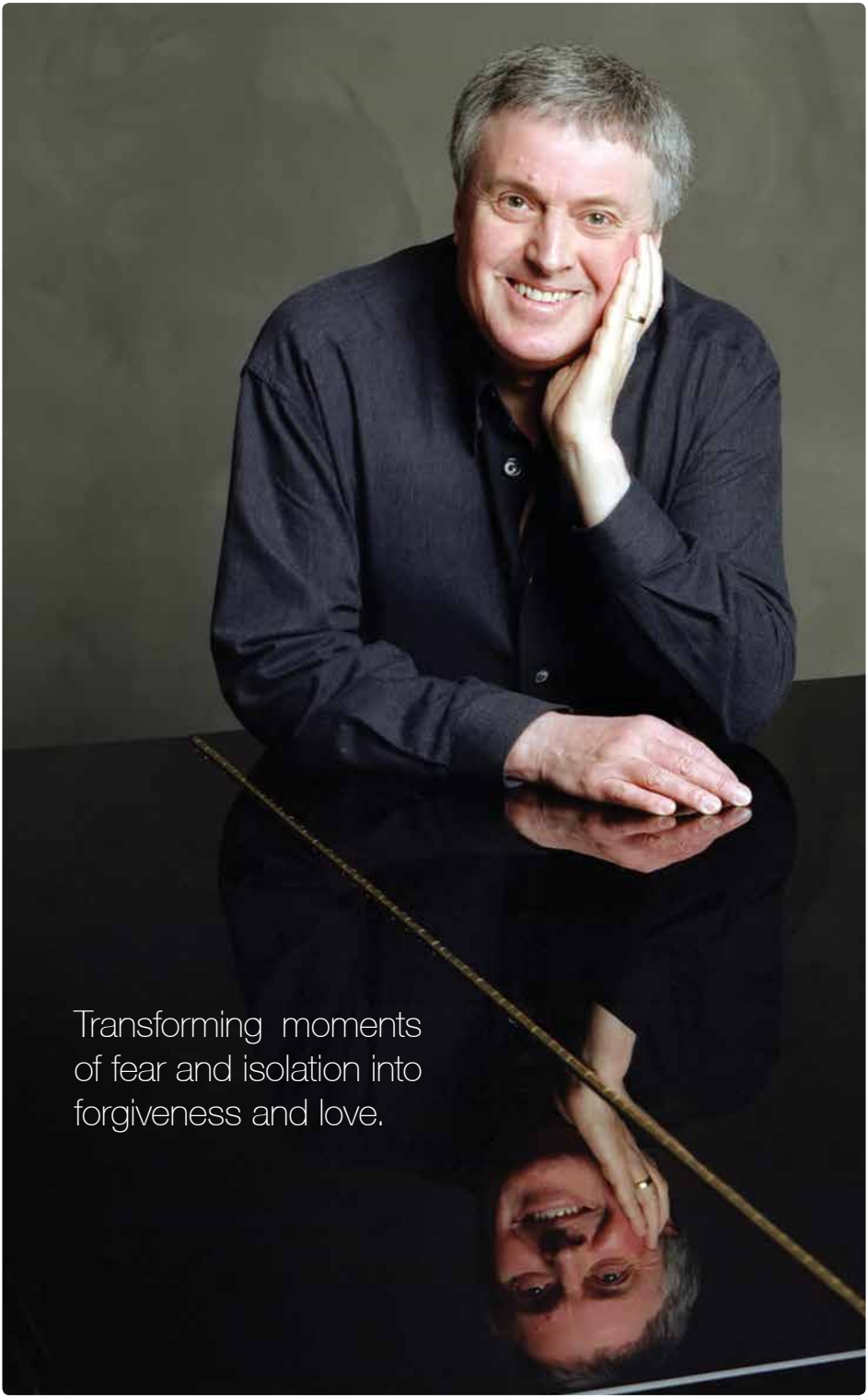


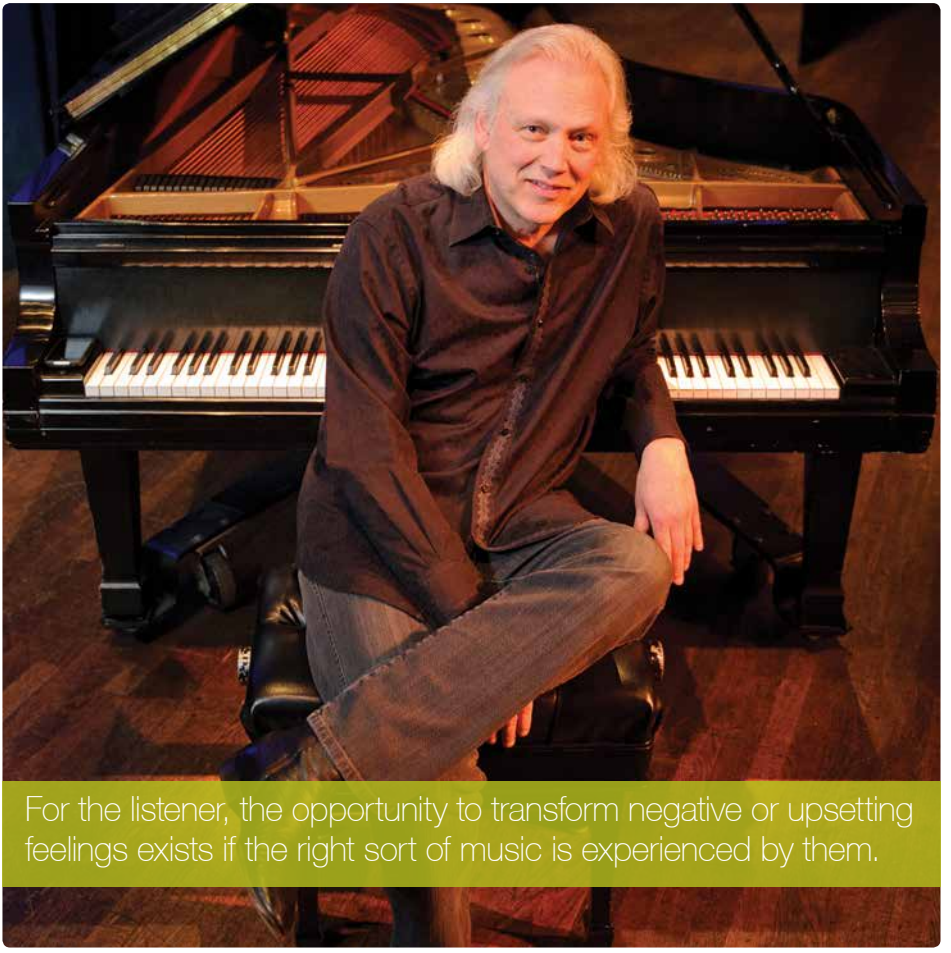
Michael Jones | COMPOSER, PIANIST & LEADERSHIP EDUCATOR

When I was invited to perform solo piano concerts, I'd often offer to do outreach work in the local community, like playing in a hospital or a school. One day that led me to what I believed to be a prison farm in Lebanon, Ohio. Well, it was not a farm. I didn't see any cows and chickens. All I saw was turrets and guns and lights. I then realized why the name Lebanon was familiar. It was a maximum security penitentiary. It took me an hour just to sign all the forms and the waivers. The forms said, essentially, that if there was a riot, I was on my own. I was led to a chapel where eighty men were awaiting my arrival. When everyone was settled in their seats, I was introduced, and then I sat down and started playing—but I was feeling very, very distracted. You know, I was just wondering how long they were going to sit there and, you know, maybe Johnny Cash could do this but this was not really for me. I had only been playing for about five minutes and a great big fellow with tattoos down both arms who was sitting in a front pew stood up and walked out. You know, by now my mind was on overdrive. At this point I was just waiting to see how many others were going to follow. I was booked to be there for about two hours, and I didn't think I was going to last fifteen minutes.

Then the same man who had just walked out re-entered the chapel and walked very, very slowly up the center aisle. He came all the way up to the piano and put a glass of water down on the piano ledge. He waited another moment or so, just watching, and then he returned to his seat. In that moment the feeling in the room changed. I turned to the men and heard their stories and shared some of my own. I was reminded how powerful a simple act of welcome and hospitality from a stranger can be in transforming moments of fear and isolation into forgiveness and love.

One of my inspirations at the piano has been the music of Frederic Chopin. Chopin would often say, "Suppleness before everything." What he wanted was flexibility in the hands to shape and mold the notes with a "velvet" hand rather than striking or forcing or—in Chopin's language—bashing them. This was the worst of all offenses in his mind. He recognized that cultivating the art of touch at the piano could not be achieved without ease. This was his trademark prescription, "facilement!" He would say easily… easily. Ease was at the core of his philosophy of piano technique. With ease a pianist could convey the impression of playing with four hands, not just two. Furthermore, when the sound originated from this sense of relaxation and ease, then it could unfold freshly and naturally. Then each could play according to their own need. This has been the value I bring to the piano and in life as well.


Transforming moments
of fear and isolation into
forgiveness and love.



For the listener, the opportunity to transform negative or upsetting feelings exists if the right sort of music is experienced by them.

David Lanz | PIANIST

Music has the ability to open us up emotionally, giving feelings a chance to rise to the surface, feelings that otherwise might not have the chance to see the light of day. For the listener, the opportunity to transform negative or upsetting feelings exists if the right sort of music is experienced, thus transforming for the moment things not easily put into words, and now turned into moments where insights, forgiveness, and love can be released.

For the musician or artist, this experience is also available, with the added benefit of not only transforming their own unexpressed feelings, but also of broadcasting a positive force through their music to the world. This has been my own experience over my lifetime as a composer and performer. An added benefit to me was the surprisingly great outpouring of love and gratitude I have received from my listening public. This in itself is a great motivation to continue creating!



Mark Lowndes | POET, SPOKEN WORD ARTIST & VOCALIST

Music is a very, very powerful tool that can sometimes unknowingly speak to our subconscious. It has the ability to evoke certain feelings, memories. It can be uplifting. It can make you feel invincible. It can put a smile on your face, and it can definitely make love and forgiveness a part of the listeners' life.

I've found that you can really convey a specific, good, and positive message in a song, but it carries more substance when the medium, the artist, the creator of the song are one with the message he or she sings about.

This journey has transformed my life, values, and worldview in so many ways.

Art and music are so powerful! They have been called the universal language, meaning everyone can speak and understand it, and it communicates to every single soul on the earth. When you listen to a lot of what's played on radio you've got to ask, "What are we passing down to the next generation? What kind of world are we trying to shape?"

Music has become full-time for me, and I'm very fortunate that it has. This journey has transformed my life, values, and worldview in so many ways. To put it simply in my own words, "Use the gift for good." We all have something to give, but it's up to you to choose why you give it.



My creative life values continue to transform me constantly as I move through the different phases of my life.

Mother Love | AUTHOR & RADIO HOST

I have seen firsthand how art and music transform our capacity to love and forgive. I have seen children and teenagers who have been hurt by the parents, relatives, and caregivers who are supposed to protect, love, and nurture them. These young people reach down to a depth of their soul and pull up creative poems, music, and lyrics that allow them to release the pent-up frustrations they don't understand but, know in their spirit are not right. It gives them strength to move forward, and not be deterred by their circumstances. When people are mentored by folks who see the bottled-up talents in them, are patient, loving, and kind, it helps them grow and flourish. This allows the capacity to forgive those who hurt them, with their art and music. It makes for a better them and a better us.

The positive values art and music should communicate to the world are first, that we are all one people, humans no matter what! We must continue to strive for the best in ourselves and others. People often believe that art is painting, drawing, and sculpting. Let us remember the definition of ART; art is a noun that means something that is created with imagination and skill.

We seem to forget the art of loving with purity, simplicity, and honesty. The art of preparing a great meal for family and friends. The art of being a good friend, listener, and parent. The art of being a good person, a kind person expecting only a "Thank you" and a "Pay it forward with your artistic talent."

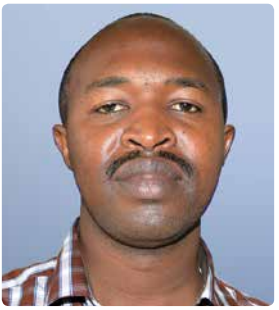
Ahh, music! It is the rhythmic beat of our connected souls. It matters not the genre; when we find the beat of the song, we are one with the music. These are the positive values we ought to be passing along for generations to come.

My creative life values continue to transform me constantly as I move through the different phases of my life. I had been transformed as a mother when I did not realize just how creative I could be in loving a teenager for testing me, learning to trust his judgment to make the right choices, because we made the right and not-so-right choices for him along the way. My creative life transforms me as a wife of several decades, learning to keep me fresh, and us fresh. We laugh, debate, and pray. As a businesswoman who works with my husband, and that is no easy feat, to keep the creative juices flowing by not taking life seriously. "We are not coming out alive!"

I thought loving our son was the best. NOT! It gets better with grandchildren! My creative values have transformed with each of our four grandchildren, two boys and two girls. With the massive societal changes seemingly daily, I have to stay on top of my creative flow. As "Awah" is the first Mother of the Earth, I have to hold fast to my beliefs to be a solid Awah member of our life village, and pass along all I know for the next generation to grow.

Benjamin Ndizeye | COUNTRY DIRECTOR FOR THE AS WE FORGIVE RWANDA INITIATIVE

Art is a way of communicating and expressing emotional feelings when there are no words. In art you can create fantastic and powerful things. Art affects our emotions, our feelings, our healing, and ways of living. It is a way of transforming the lifestyle of a human being. It can affect us positively or negatively, depending on the content. It is a key vehicle in transmitting messages in all areas of life, and people are using it as a strong weapon to overcome challenges.



There are many reasons that art is particularly powerful in the transformation of our love and forgiveness. When you consider the programs offered in places such as church, jail, school, and public places, you find that art affects the development of learning, behaving, working, and communicating. The field of brain research contributes to the way we understand how art affects neurological functions. The visual focus required by an artist in any discipline—dance, music, painting, and theater—helps develop and refine higher-level brain functions such as memory and generating meaning. Cognitive functions such as correlating information and inferring relationships, reflection, and applying solutions to problems have been identified as integral to the art-making process. Art touches the brain and empowers decision making.

I have found a lot of tangible proof of how art and music contribute to our capacity to love and to forgive.

When we talk about transforming our capacity to love and to forgive, it is because art touches our emotions. The arts are not frills relegated to the margins of government programs. They are an essential part of the health and safety infrastructure as well as part of the cultural fabric of our society.

In preparation for the 1994 genocide perpetrated against Tutsis, art and music were used to mobilize people to exterminate Tutsis in Rwanda. On the other hand, music has empowered Rwandan Patriotic Front soldiers to take courage and move ahead to stop the genocide. Similarly, many artists have contributed to the reconciliation of Rwanda. In my own experience, I have found a lot of tangible proof of how art and music contribute to our capacity to love and to forgive. As someone who has led the process of forgiveness by using artistic tools, I can confirm that art affects love and forgiveness. I have conducted debates after screening the movie As We Forgive in churches, schools, prisons, and other public places, and every time the audience came to a decision to forgive.

Noah Star Weaver | KEYBOARDIST & VOCALIST IN UNITED STATE OF ELECTRONICA

God and music often go hand in hand. Many of the most profound spiritual encounters of my life have involved music. On May 20, 2006, I wandered past a cathedral in Seattle where a concert was going on. I'd never heard the piece before, Mass in B Minor by J.S. Bach, but I thought I'd check it out. As soon as I walked in, I felt a spiritual presence that I couldn't explain. Though I wasn't a Christian at that point, I was looking for God, and I was drawn into this experience. As I sat there in the back taking it in, I could sense there was something happening beyond just the music itself.



This presence grew stronger and stronger throughout the performance, until at last I asked, "Christ, is that you?" Immediately the music washed over me like a tidal wave, and I heard him say, "Yes, it is me, and I have been with you all along. Even though you didn't know it was me, I have been carrying you this whole time." This came as a complete surprise to me, but as soon as I heard these words, my whole life began to make sense. I could now see how he had been with me all along, even when I was running away from him. The grace and love that I felt in that moment changed me forever, and continue to change me day by day.

God is love, and the more He lives in us, the greater our capacity to love and forgive—both ourselves and others.

This experience confirms to me that it is not just the music, but God himself touching our hearts through the music. I couldn't understand the German language this piece was sung in, and I didn't even know what music I was listening to at the time, but Christ spoke to me through it, regardless. Music has the ability to shift the atmosphere and environment in a way that makes us more attuned to the spiritual realm. In this state of heightened spiritual sensitivity, we can become more aware of God's presence and voice. It is God Himself who changes our capacity to love and forgive, but I believe music is one of his favorite tools for doing so. He is a creative God, and he designed us to be creators as well—each one of us.

The creative process is an incredible tool for learning to walk with God. When I am writing a song, I am opening myself up to something beyond myself. The more I am able to forget about myself, the more easily the melodies and words flow through me. It's exactly the same with love. The more I am able to forget about myself and put someone else's needs above my own, the better I am able to love. I feel that all the time I have spent writing music has increased both my desire and capacity to live beyond myself. It has taught me how to listen for God's voice and respond in faith. God is love, and the more He lives in us, the greater our capacity to love and forgive—both ourselves and others.



Kevin Asbjörnson | PIANIST & KEYNOTE SPEAKER

We live in a global society that inundates us and our living space with sound, music, noise, arguments, debates, and endless points of view. The arrival of the iPhone and iTunes has been welcomed as a means by which we can individually choose the music, sounds, and conversations with which we want to engage. We each have our playlists of favorite artists, singers, songs, and bands, which we eagerly share with our circle of friends and colleagues. The most important playlist in our life, however; is often overlooked and sometimes neglected; this is the playlist of "Me." You are a unique human being with gifts, talents, interests, and energy that is found only in the DNA of "Me."

I finally woke-up as a composer, contemporary pianist, and recording artist at the age of 30 to discover that I was so busy and engaged with sounds, music, conversations, and points of view of other people, that the playlist of "Me" had been stranded and left behind, requiring me to begin a journey to rediscover it. Your unique playlist is influenced by your values, principles, motivations, and interests; regardless of the parents, family, society, and country of origin into which you are born. However, each of us ultimately makes choices about the music on the playlist of "Me." I am reminded of the wisdom of the greeting card artist J. Stone, who reminds us that "Each one of us has been given the gift of life in order to explore and discover that which really matters."

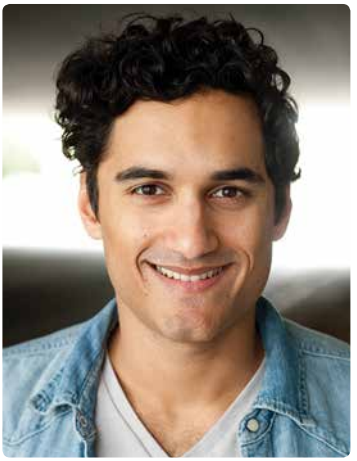




Exploring and discovering what really matters invites introspection for each of us; are we really exploring and discovering in our life that which really matters, or are we compromising the unique playlist of "Me" and accepting the explorations and discoveries of others? The discovery and exploration of the unique playlist of "Me" require each of us to transcend our physical world occasionally and enter the realm of spirituality, regardless of how each of us defines spirituality. It is in the realm of spirituality that we confront three of the most important questions pertaining to the playlist of "Me:" Who am I? Who am I in relation to others? How am I using my unique gifts and talents in the service of others?

In the busyness of our lives and global society, make the time and space to move beyond hearing the music of others' playlists and listen for and create the music of the play list of "Me." There is a significant difference between hearing music and listening to music. Are you simply hearing the music or listening for and creating the music on the playlist of "Me?" Create a playlist in honor of you on your iPhone, and imagine what the music sounds like, which is truly the music of you.

The discovery and exploration of the unique playlist of "Me" requires each of us to transcend our physical world occasionally and enter into the realm of spirituality.





Johan Andersson | ARTIST & PAINTER

Art and music soften the heart and open our hearts for worship, which restores perspective. Perspective in God's love for us makes it easier to forgive, as when we experience God's love in an intimate and profound way, we cannot do anything but love others as a result.

Art and music encourage talents to be seen and shown to the rest of the world. They bring healing and transform the atmosphere and mood around you. I believe music and art should be treated with the same level of respect as literacy at school.

My own creative life is all about giving a voice to the voiceless through my paintings and redefining perspectives through juxtaposition of branding and life stories. Through painting my "Stolen Faces" series, I have seen people differently and really understood how we are uniquely made in God's image. The series challenges preconceptions of beauty and identity. Painting has also made me realize how one's work can be taken beyond the four walls of a gallery and change lives by restoring humanity and dignity over commercialisation.

Art and music encourages talents to be seen and shown to the rest of the world. It brings healing and transforms the atmosphere and mood around you.



Dave Baxter | SINGER-SONGWRITER IN **AVALANCHE CITY**

There's something about music that influences our emotions. Music is everywhere. We're all drawn to it, it livens up parties, it's been used to set scenes in theatre, and used as a backdrop to stories forever. We understand that music can move us. Those of us who have watched an orchestra perform understand the full force and beauty of music. Yet beyond music's ability to influence our emotions, I feel that stories, words, and ideas are the things that really change us inside. Ideas wriggle their way into our heads and affect us tremendously. When the right music finds its way alongside the right story or message, the results can be huge.

It's not surprising that music has been involved in catalytic changes throughout generations. The stories we read and the music we listen to absolutely do transform us. I'm not saying "Be careful what you listen to, or read, or watch." Not at all. I'm saying that sometimes the right song or right story or right message can reach us when we've hit a wall or a fork in the road or we've fallen and we're not sure if it's worth getting up and we need something to re-energise or inspire us. That's why music about love and hope can be so powerful. More often than not, at pivotal points in our life, a story about love, hope, and forgiveness is what we need most.

The stories we read, and the music we listen to, absolutely do transform us.

I'm not sure my values have been changed by my creative life. I'm definitely more aware that music can heal and music can help us through difficult times. I've had a few messages from people telling me how my music has helped them through tough times. That's something I never intended or thought about with my first album, and it's been incredible to hear how something I've done has affected and helped other people so much. I was only trying to write music that was interesting and that meant something to me. I'm not someone who's trying to change the world through music. But this has made me aware of the positive impact music can have in people's lives.

Dan Moody | CEO & DIRECTOR OF **GLOBAL PEACE PARTNERS**

Through art, music, and any creative gift that we have, we can invite others into our lives without dominating or threatening in any way their own unique goals and purpose in life. There is almost no greater power than faith. Indeed faith is the seed that nurtures hope. Hope becomes the plant that produces the flower. The flower in full bloom is the essence of love! Faith transcends all that we can see, touch, and feel into a beyond that has no limits. When art and music are created as a response or reflection of this faith, they are then supported by an internal power that is far above and beyond ourselves. When our hearts, minds, and souls have transcended the natural worries, frustrations, and fears of life, then a dimension is added that can sweep aside the hurts and pains. This then enables our abilities to understand and forgive those things and people that have caused us annoyance and pain.

There is nothing like music to communicate joy, a sense of celebration, and deliver a freedom beyond the captivity of everyday life.

The beat, the tune, the harmonies, and the lyrics lift beyond the boundaries of ourselves, soar above our pettiness, and open our capacity to embrace others beyond their own human limitations. There is nothing like music to communicate joy, a sense of celebration, and deliver a freedom beyond the captivity of everyday life. There was no better demonstration of this than in the days of slavery in the United States, when the music of our African American brethren soared above the sorrow and suffering of a people held captive.

When my little brother died in 1959, I was introduced to Handel's *Messiah* at the age of nine. The music was majestic; the poetry was beautiful. About the mid-1980s through a brief encounter with Tom Sine, author of *A Mustard Seed Conspiracy*, these same words and music were transformed to power: the power of transformation, the power of life, the power of healing, and most importantly, the power of love—perhaps the rarest ingredient in our world today. It was in this frame of mind that I left my comfort zones behind and went into some of the darkest places in America and Canada—jails and prisons. It was in one of these settings that I had the opportunity to meet the president of the most feared street gang in Canada. His picture had been on the front pages of newspapers across the nation for two years. It was to this reformed man I held up the absolute belief that life could be different, and so it became!

I leave you with this article unfinished, unanswered, so you, too, can search the depths of your heart and write the finishing chapter with your own life.


Dennis Studio

Application

Q: When have you experienced a personal transformation through art?

Q: How can art help one transform his or her capacity to love and forgive?

Q: Consider the transformation of an art medium and how it relates to your actual life.



Unity


LOVE
LIVE
FORGIVE

Art unites when people appreciate the same artist, although they may be drawn to this individual for different reasons. As a collective, these people become part of a fan-base that serves to share the love of the artist, support their work, and provide them with an audience. Unity plays a massive role in the ability to foster a growing audience, building a brand for an artist, and raising his or her profile. In this sense, art can serve as community glue, bringing people together and increasing awareness of their shared values and appreciation they experience when exposed to the artist's work.

Unity is also a principle of art, when all elements of a piece combine to make a balanced, harmonious, and complete whole. This extends to the audience. As we admire and appreciate art, we are united, and drawn closer to the artist through their creation. Concerts and galleries enable artists to showcase their work with the world. This unifying force brings people together through a shared experience. It also allows us a glimpse into the final stage of the creative process: exposure to the world. The spirit of unity does not discriminate on the basis of faith, race, or nationality. In this sense of unity, art transcends cultural and faith-based backgrounds, and gives rise to acceptance, oneness, and genuine appreciation.

Within this final chapter on Unity we see the potential for powerful societal change, fueled by art. In her essay, Katrina Johansson recognizes that "throughout history, music has been the unifying force to inspire change." Kesi Dryden, producer and songwriter in Rudimental understands the communicative and universal power of music, simply in bringing people together. Shakrah Yves feels deep gratitude for the uniting impact her art has had, "the greatest gift that making art with others has given me is community." Encapsulating the ideas throughout this book, Speech offers his empowering conclusion that "Art stands in the front of history as the guide towards equality, unity, truth, and higher purpose."

Reflection

Q: How does each artist unite his or her community?

Q: Why is music so effective in creating unity?

Q: Is unity a necessary ingredient to encourage transformation through art or music?

Katrina Johansson | GUITARIST

Throughout history, music has been the unifying force to inspire change, inspiring nations to forgive one another, and transforming our capacity to love, forgive, and unite diverse people. Peaceful protesters during the civil rights movement moved a nation while singing, "We Shall Overcome." Clinton's campaign theme song, "Don't Stop Thinking About Tomorrow" by one of my favorite bands, Fleetwood Mac, challenged people to think about the future. Political movements always seem to use music to move and unite people. Some of you may remember when "We Are the World" united people worldwide, online, millions singing a song about unity, peace, and love. How many times have you heard a song whose lyrics seemed to capture everything you wanted to say to someone or maybe helped you through a difficult time? When we celebrate, music is always present also. Music is in our DNA; even babies who cannot understand lyrics or the complexity of musical passages dance whenever they hear music.

Throughout history, music has been the unifying force to inspire change.

Music teaches us so many important life lessons that we may not ever acknowledge. Becoming a musician, professional or not, takes a lot of hard work and discipline to learn to play an instrument, write music, or play in a band. Hard work and discipline, even humility, are lessons learned from practicing for years and experiencing the end result, the therapeutic joy of playing your instrument well. Even playing in a band you learn to deal with many different personalities and you also learn the importance of diversity. Hard work and discipline, creativity, and the value of diversity are such important life lessons that music teaches us.



My own creative life has taught me so many lessons, including the importance of learning to surrender and forgive. The title of my second CD is *Love, Surrender, Forgiveness*. There are a million ways you can interpret that and apply it to your own struggles. Haven't we all experienced some type of rejection or falling out with someone? Forgiveness has the power to heal, and surrendering your struggles to God or a higher power can transform your life.

Sri Sri Ravi Shankar | SPIRITUAL LEADER & TEACHER

Everybody has the capacity to love and forgive. It is our very nature, but it just gets covered due to stress. Art, music, and other creative pursuits can put us back in touch with our self. In yoga, we learn about the different energy centers in our body and the different feelings associated with them. Through creative activities, we can direct our energy toward higher values of love and compassion.

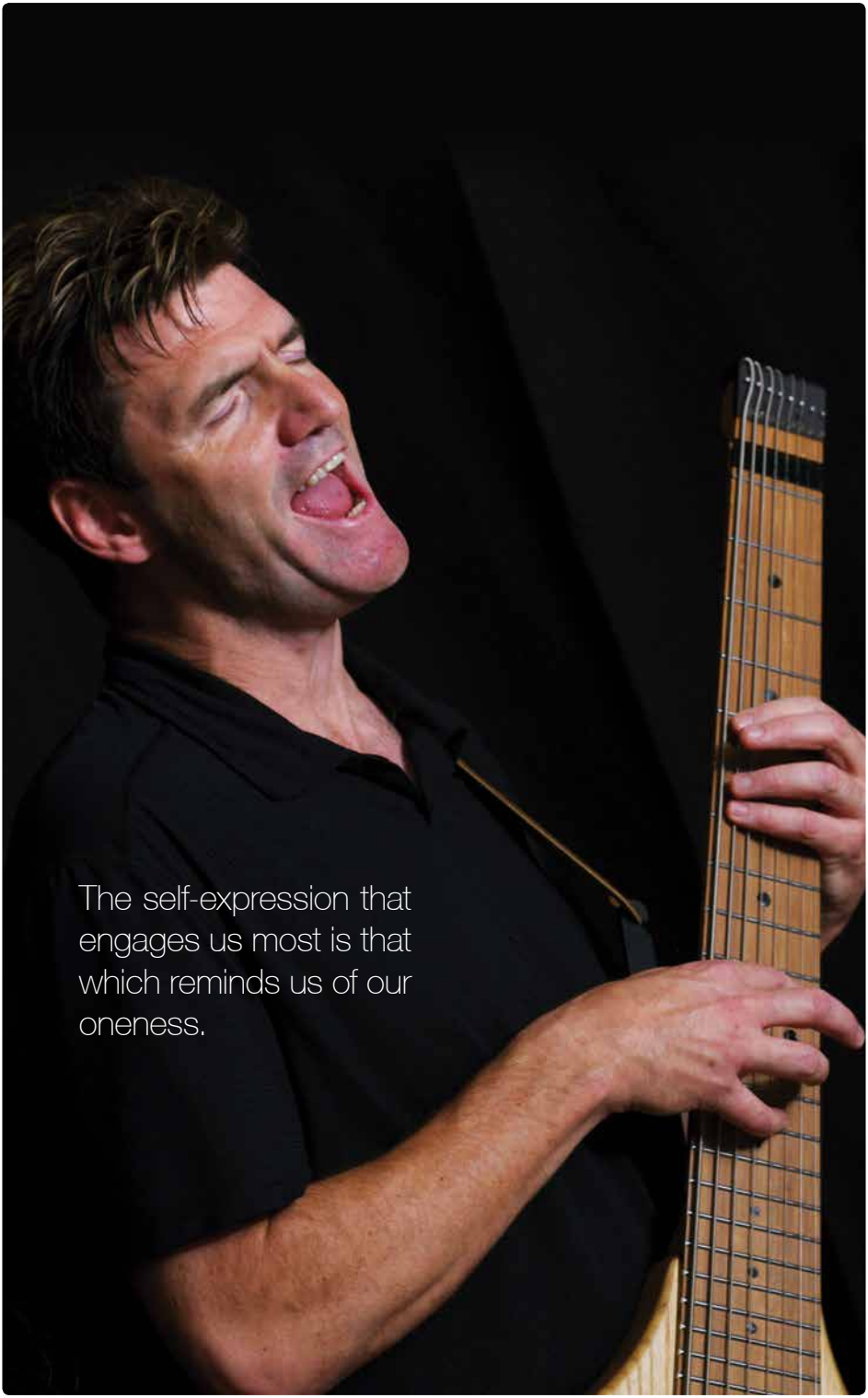
From a different angle, we tend to use our left brain most of the time, which is responsible for making decisions and planning. Music, dance, and other such activities awaken our right brain and bring balance and harmony to our being. Love and forgiveness are natural qualities that we find present within us when we are in a harmonious state of mind. Along with these activities, I would also highly recommend meditation to achieve that perfect balance.

Through creative activities, we can direct our energy towards higher values of love and compassion.

Art and music are associated with finer feelings like creativity and a sense of wonder, without which life is not complete. Music is also a universal language that unites people from different backgrounds. It brings people closer and promotes bonding. In our daily congregation in the evening, we have people from all parts of the globe who sing and dance together, and it creates such an atmosphere of joy and love. A lot of the ancient cultures all over the world have a tradition of singing or chanting in groups, because it uplifts the vibrations of the place. Many mystics and poets also express their revelations and experiences in poems or songs. The depth of meaning in these songs makes them timeless. They remain popular even after decades or centuries.



I still think of myself as a child who refuses to grow up, and by nature, children are creative in anything they do. I want to see a smile on everybody's face, to tell them that life is a celebration. I just started teaching and sharing whatever I know. People had good experiences, and more people came and the Art of Living evolved. When you are willing to be an instrument of the divine, what comes out of you is exactly what is needed at that time. All the talents or abilities that we have are gifts to us. It is up to us to use them to serve others and make the world a better place.

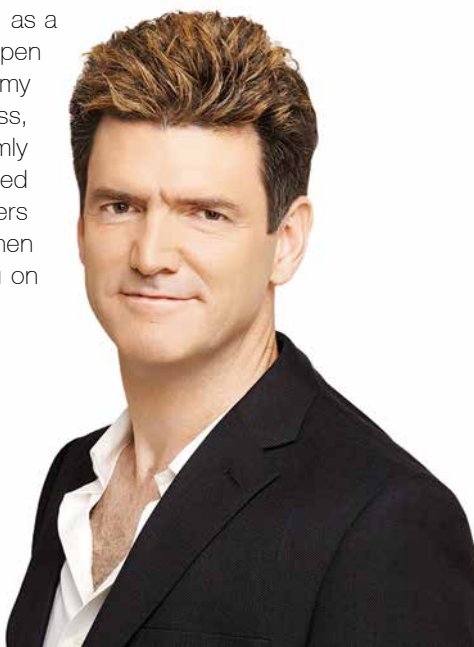

The self-expression that engages us most is that which reminds us of our oneness.

Nathen Aswell | SINGER-SONGWRITER

I believe that each of us is born with the desire—and ability—to express ourselves in a unique way, and to share that self-expression with others. The more we give voice to that self-expression—in whatever way most resonates for us—the better we feel; and the better we feel, the more engaged we are with everyone and everything around us. How could we help but be more loving and forgiving as a result? If you can relate to this in your experience, congratulations! Thanks for all that you do, and please keep doing it! If you have yet to experience this for yourself, please take heart; your unique gift is alive and well in you and it WILL manifest—it's why you're here, and it's what you've come to share! Here's a big clue: What makes you feel the most alive? DO IT, and see what unfolds!

For me, the positive value that self-expression most communicates to the world is oneness. We ALL want to share our gifts—our hearts—and the more we do, the more we encourage others to do the same. Because we ARE the same: We all feel joy, we all feel sadness, we all feel anger, we all feel fear—and we all love. The self-expression that engages us most is that which reminds us of our oneness. Who hasn't heard a song or watched a movie that has brought them to tears, made them laugh or energized them? Better yet, who hasn't been in the middle of a family gathering or crowd and participated in a group song, dance, or creation of something? Aren't we ALL transformed by those moments of shared experience and connection? Don't they change how we see the world and how we live in it?

Music is the way that I most fully express myself, and it has been for most of my life. Looking back, the gift of all of the years of working at my craft—composing, recording, practicing, performing—is in seeing how I have matured, both as an artist and as a man. As an artist, my path is less and less about "me" and more and more about "we"; as a man, my path is about choosing to live with an open heart and being 100 percent accountable for my actions. In every moment, music is my compass, and it allows me to both fly freely AND to stand firmly on solid ground; and everywhere I go, I am blessed to be able to share my gifts and to encourage others to share their gifts as well. As I'm fond of saying when I'm performing, "I love my job!" Blessings to you on YOUR journey!





Jamie Catto | FILMMAKER, MUSICIAN & WRITER

One of the great things about music is that it crosses all boundaries, and it really opens up the heart. When I first listened to lyrics, particularly Peter Gabriel, even though I felt alone and even though he was far, far, far away, that feeling of connection to someone miles away whom I'd never met really opened my heart, and it was that massive heart-opening moment that made me fall in love with music. Everyone has their connection to music based in the intimacy that it gives them, even if they feel alone. It crosses all borders as well. You can be at a concert and the music doesn't know whether you're a brick layer or a high court judge—when you feel the opening chords of the song that you all love, you're all one and you all roar together in appreciation.

Music joins us, and it brings us into our hearts, and that naturally makes us forgive. Music is like the instrument of the divine goddess that brings us into "we," not "I" and brings us into collaboration, not competition. I, for one, want to be an instrument of the divine goddess through my music, through my films, through my workshops, through all the things I write. It's all about bringing that sense of unity and intimacy with each other to a tangible experience for everybody.

I always talk about this in my project-building workshops "What About You?" Your project, your output, the thing you're working on becomes your ashram. It becomes the curriculum for your soul, especially if you're doing this forty hours a week or more. All the challenges, all the places where you're stuck, all the



limiting beliefs, they're all going to come up loud and proud and be mirrored to you during your work. My working life, and my creative life, has given me so many opportunities to see all the places that I'm stuck, all the places that I'm believing the limited, and to face the limiting beliefs about myself.

It's all about bringing that sense of unity and intimacy with each other to a tangible experience on Earth for everybody.

All the great challenges of being a human are available to me in my creative work—travelling around the world, sometimes too busy to try to get the footage or write the chorus for the song and not actually listening and watching what's actually going on around me, missing what's right under my nose and missing a great opportunity to connect with someone or even offending someone sometimes. All my scarcity addictions about Will there be enough money? Will I be able to feed the children? How does this go on? Because being an artist isn't like being in a bank, where you know the path through the company, you're going to get promotions and this and that, and it's all going to be smooth until you retire. Being a musician, you're up one minute and then you're down the next; no one loves it, everyone loves it. You're constantly faced with your scarcity addiction—is there going to be enough for me?

Ted Gioia | AUTHOR & MUSICIAN

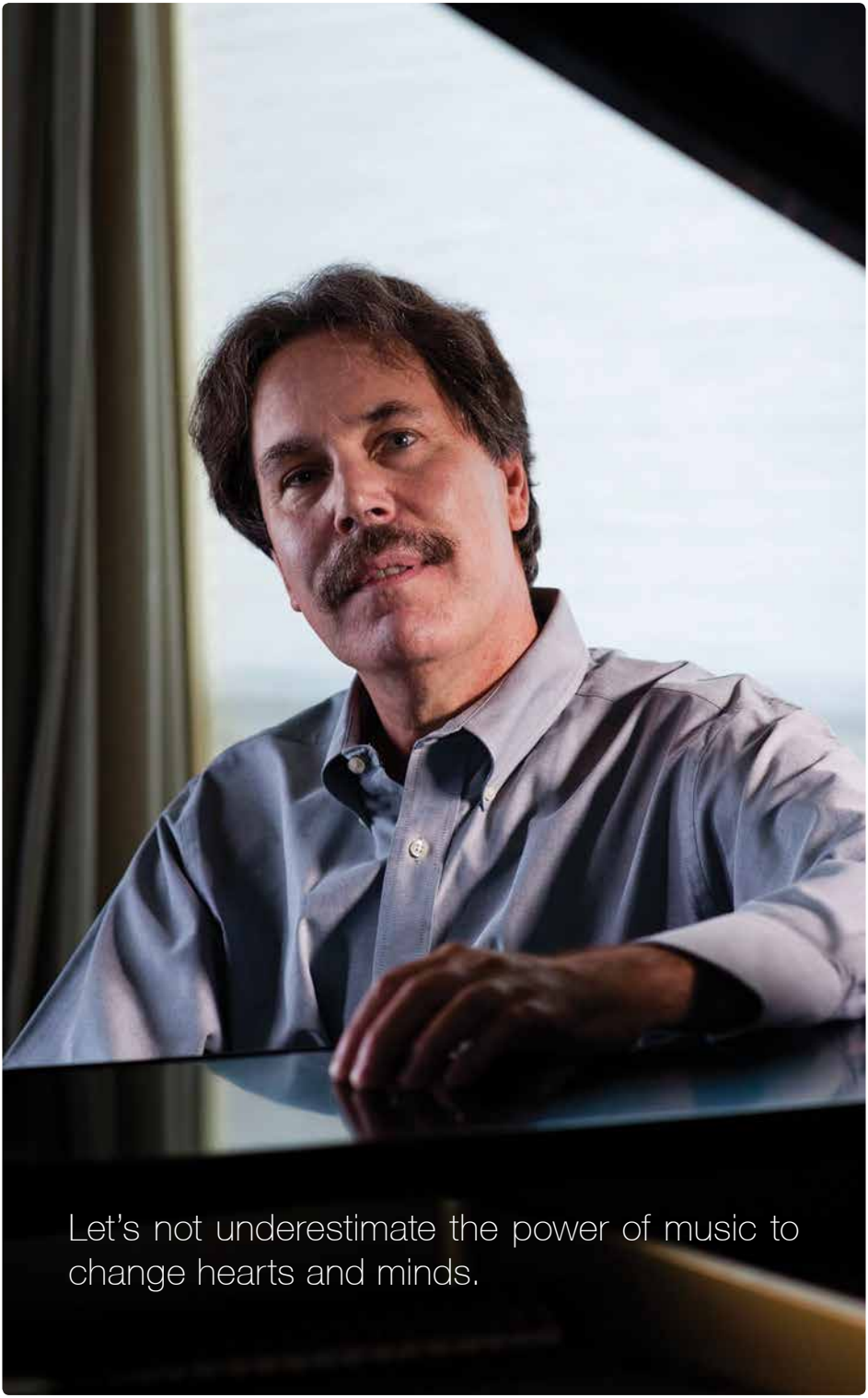
Our culture is built increasingly on anger and confrontation. I've traced the history of this unfortunate syndrome in my book *The Birth (and Death) of the Cool*, where I describe the situation as "modern society losing its cool." You see this in many ways—on talk radio, in town hall meetings, in social media, and especially in virtually every modern outlet for political discourse. One of the fastest growing professions is "anger management counseling." That didn't even exist as a job title when I was a youngster, but now anger management is a booming business.

Music-making is the exact opposite of this. Who knows, maybe music was the first anger management therapy? Put people together in a musical ensemble or some other group creative endeavor, and they learn how to interact and express themselves in non-confrontational ways. You can't make good music when you're angry, and the whole path of artistic expression forces us to tap into our most vulnerable emotions. If we could live the rest of our lives with the mindset we bring to music-making, our world would be a much different place.

Let's not underestimate the power of music to change hearts and minds. Long before the end of segregation in the United States, jazz musicians began performing together in integrated bands. Back in 1923, a white band called the New Orleans Rhythm Kings joined up with African American pianist Jelly Roll Morton, and both were delighted at the opportunity to collaborate in music-making. At the height of his fame in the mid-1930s, Benny Goodman moved to integrate his band. You need to remember that Goodman was the most popular bandleader in America at the time, and this move came more than a decade before professional sports accepted black players and almost two decades before the end of school segregation in the United States.

I could give many other examples, but my larger point is that music brings people together. Researchers have proven its importance in "coalition building," as they describe it. But let me describe the same phenomenon as expanding the human heart's capacity for love and forgiveness.

I am writing a book on the history of love songs, and my research has convinced me that music teaches us how to love. In fact, Darwin believed that music played precisely this role in the evolution of the species. Most people think of love songs as dealing only with physical love, but the history of music shows that songs also express the highest forms of spiritual or divine love. Certainly St. Francis of Assisi believed this when he borrowed from the love songs of the troubadours in composing his famous canticle. At almost the very same moment in history, Rumi was tapping into the power of song to express divine love in 13th century Islamic society. Dante expressed a very similar view of music and spiritual love. Even in the modern day, the iconic saxophonist John Coltrane enjoyed the biggest commercial success of his career with his album *A Love Supreme*, a powerful example of music as source and expression of transcendent love.


Let's not underestimate the power of music to change hearts and minds.



Kesi Dryden | PRODUCER & SONGWRITER IN **RUDIMENTAL**

Music is a very powerful tool of getting love and forgiveness around. Love can mean so many different things. Before Rudimental really took off, I used to work in schools with young people, and I used to teach them music. That was all through the love of music and watching young people progress and go on to bigger things. It was something that all four of us were very into—loved community and building relationships with young people and just giving off a positive vibe. I think our albums show that as well. We're a very positive group, and it's all about triumphing in negative situations a lot of the time. Forgiveness is something that you just have to do. Everybody makes mistakes; we're all human. It's just something that should be a part of life.

Music is a great way of communicating. It brings people together, which is an amazing thing. When we play at music festivals, we like strangers to be at one with each other—all become one person and get together. I think music is great for doing that—bringing people together, getting people through troubled times. Music is very therapeutic. It can help you in stressful times and can bring out the positives in so many different aspects of life.

Music has transformed my personal values immensely. I started off from a young age playing drums around the house and playing piano. I got into collaborating with other people and working with others, which is amazing —forming a relationship and a bond through music, all in the aim of just

making the best sound you can. That's something that Rudimental's all about —working together and bringing out the best in each other. Rudimental's all about collaboration.

One of the personal bits of advice that I can share is to always show your work to people. Don't ever be afraid, no matter what stage it's in. If it's unfinished or finished, don't be afraid to play it to people, because you never know who's listening or where it could end up. An example of this was "Feel The Love"—the core idea that I wrote myself. I actually had it sitting on my computer for about six months and didn't show anybody. I just had it in the car on a CD one day with a few other chaps that I had written and produced core ideas for. One of my friends said, "Wow! This is something special. Have you got a bit more?" So I showed it to the rest of the guys, Rudimental finished off the track, and it came out as something really special.

So, no matter what stage your music's at, never be afraid to get other people's opinions or to ask for help, because everybody needs help; everybody has to work together. There are so many different stages of a musical career, or producing a piece of music, and you have to be a part of the team, so always show your work to people.

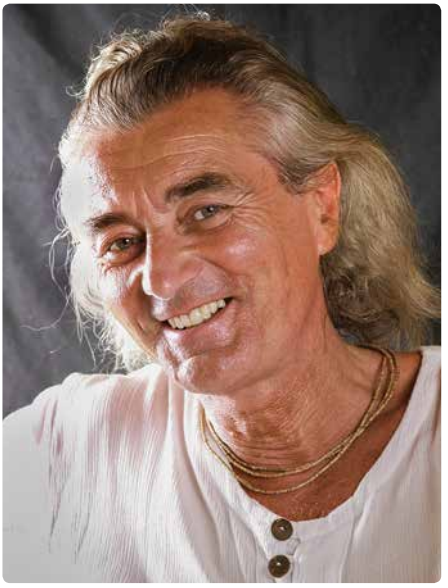
Music is a great way of communicating. It brings people together which is an amazing thing.



Love and Forgiveness:

The goal and function of the sound vibrations I'm looking for are to create a vibrational tool able to manifest in my own spirit this kind of love and this quality of forgiveness. If I feel real love while listening to or playing my music, then I know the listeners will feel the same. The goal is not to compose a series of clever harmonic progressions, as we do in jazz. The goal is not to excite the physical body, as we do in rock, or to impress the emotional mind, as we do in pop.

The goal is beyond. Music is a means to elevate the human soul. Somehow music opens the sacred heart. By doing so, music brings solace, inner peace, and, above all, a profound sense of spiritual joy. It is sometimes a thankless task for the musician, because he or she must transcend creating elaborate compositions. Music is simple. Sophisticated music touches only the mind but does not change the heart. Therefore the musician becomes a physician. Music heals the energetic knots and obstructions created by ancient negative memories and toxic emotions. Music gives an inner shower to the chakra system, clearing the dust of resentment, fear, anxiety, wrath, guilt, shame, doubt, and illusion. Listening to the music I want to make, the listener awakens to their true self. Otherwise, making music is just a cool waste of time.



The Message:

Everything is sound. Even the infamous "Big Bang" is a sound. All forms, colors, perfumes or skins are crystalized sound frequencies. All the wars and conflicts in the world are originated from distorted sounds. All wars are cultural and religious wars. The function of art, and music in particular, is to unite, to harmonize, to show that here is only one universal spirit in the galaxies, one big design and one big designer. That's why I use sacred chants and mantra, or prayers, from different traditions. The idea is to feel that "Christ or Krishna: the name is the same." It is not a question of understanding, or a creed; it's a

question of feeling, an inner experience. Then peace becomes possible, and from peace comes happiness. If humanity remains stubborn and chooses to refuse to feel this oneness, we are doomed and everything will be washed away sooner or later by the waves of nuclear devices.

The function of art, and music in particular, is to unite.

My music says to the world "We are one, we are loved, we are divine life force, holographic part and parcel of the supreme life force. We will live in an abundant and peaceful civilization when we stop wanting to lord it over material nature. If you want to be a master of harmony, first you have to be a servant of harmony. If you want to be the master of the universe, the universe will destroy you. Live in harmony with the laws of nature. Don't exploit nature; cooperate with nature. Forget your old ways of fanatic religiosity and feel in your inner awareness that all beings are from the same source." The function of art, and music in particular, is to unite.

The Transformation:

At the end of the 1960s, I did some folk countercultural music. During the 1970s, I was fascinated by progressive rock music. In the beginning of the 1980s, I produced several LPs promoting philosophical compositions inspired by the timeless wisdom of ancient books like the *Bhagavad Gita* and the Bible. At the mid-1980s, I put myself through local pop-rock radio success with new wave songs. Yet I wasn't satisfied.

My guide and spiritual masters, Bhaktivedanta Swami and Sridhar Deva Goswami, from the Vaďsnava Vedic School, advised me to follow the middle path of dedication, between the two extremes of exploitation and renunciation. To renounce music or anything else would be artificial. Music does not belong to us, so how could we renounce it? On the other hand, to make music in the spirit of exploitation would bring success eventually together with troubles and sufferings. Dedication means you make music in order to please the big designer of the universal harmony, following the flow and current of the big design. One of the best and easiest ways to do that is to chant the holy names of Godhead in any spiritual tradition. Follow your bliss. Chant and be happy. Simple living but high thinking. The effect is a complete transformation. What transformation? A change of heart. An ascension of consciousness.

Gabriele Palmieri | COMPOSER & MUSICIAN

Jules Cambarieu stated, "Music is the art of thinking with sounds." To paraphrase his statement I would prefer to say, "Music is the art of feeling with sounds." Music owns a tremendous power; it can transform people's feelings, beliefs, and thoughts. The composer's feelings expressed in a piece of music can become the listener's feelings, or the listener can find resonance in their own state of mind in the music they hear. I believe this is something incredible!



The power of music can also draw out the worst from human souls, offering messages of violence, full of hatred and racist slogans. There are many expressions of this in the music industry. Youth are often the most vulnerable to receive these negative messages conveyed through music. That is why I am involved in Play Music—Stop Violence, a project run by the Community of Sant'Egidio. This movement of lay people has more than 60,000 members dedicated to evangelisation and charity in Italy and in more than seventy-three countries throughout the world. This youth musical competition offers the opportunity for young musicians to explore, through their original music, important and timely issues: peace, solidarity, racism, violence, war, respect for life, and living together within different cultures. This year the final concert has been held in the Auditorium of Rome with more than 1,200 people, mostly youth, in attendance. This has been a great opportunity to foster awareness of love and peace in many young students in the grip of violence.

Music has a true power to transform the world. Songs have made history and have been anthems of peace movements. "We Shall Overcome," for instance, was the anthem of the movement of Martin Luther King Jr. against racial segregation in the United States. The National Anthem of South Africa is made up of two hymns: "Nkosi Sikelel'i Africa" and "Die Stem van Suid-Afrika." The first ("God Protect Africa" in Xhosa), was the anthem of the African National Congress (ANC), the party of Nelson Mandela, and the second ("The Call of South Africa" in Afrikaans) was the anthem of South Africa dominated by whites. The two pieces were joined in 1997 by Nelson Mandela in a single piece of music to mark the unity of the people of South Africa. The international hit "We Are the World" represented the reaction of the greatest singers of the

1980s to the terrible famine in Ethiopia. In this sense, music has been a real force for change in the face of situations that seemed unchangeable.

I believe that music moves hearts and minds, brings men and women together, and leads them to lift up their eyes and open up to beauty, to peace, and to God. Music is universal: it touches everyone's heart. In my experience, in order to create good music, it is necessary to confront reality, to see things with one's own eyes, to personally get in contact with situations of suffering. It is very difficult to write about something without true understanding. This will be an incredible source of inspiration. The beauty of music can resonate and spread positive messages that unify and do not divide.



I always had, since I was six years old, a strong desire to play the piano, and some years later I specialized in writing musical scores for films. My music profession has always played a fundamental role in my volunteering with marginalized children, immigrants, and elderly people. I believe that music has to come from experience and proximity to the lives of others.

I think this is an ongoing process. I like to think that music is characterized by harmony, because in a chord, all elements have a place, without prevailing over the others, and each contribution makes all the others better. There are many fundamental attributes that music carries that can be a lesson for life. If we take the main elements of music and we apply them to life, I think we can be transformed continuously. With my music I would like to touch hearts and minds, and with its power, communicate my desire for a better world.

The beauty of music can resonate and spread positive messages, which unify and do not divide.



Deepak Ram | COMPOSER & FLUTIST

In the play "The Merchant of Venice," Shakespeare writes: "The man who hath no music in himself, nor is moved with concord of sweet sounds, is fit for treason, stratagems and spoils." I believe art and music belong to a parallel universe that the supreme intelligence gifted to us to experience and express.

Essentially, humans always seek to express and celebrate beauty through activities that provide no tangible or material benefit, other than the need for pure expression. This fulfils a natural need we all have to express the aesthetic or beautiful through all forms of art and music. This primordial celebration of beauty cannot be expounded or expressed without inherent love. That unconditional love feeds compassion and forgiveness.

Collaboration with musicians from many different countries, has made me a devotee of diversity and the beauty it shares.

The inherent celebration and sharing of beauty exists in all art-forms. Even when some visual art or modern avant garde music forms express dark

emotions or themes, the underlying beauty always emerges. There is a lot of research on the positive effects of music on learning and on both physical and mental health. While this is clearly documented, the non-tangible benefits and its influence on human values are many.

To the serious devotee of art and music, it gives rise to concentration and independent thought, which is why I suspect that many unjust regimes try to control the output of art and music. In my home country of South Africa, where music is the fabric and soul of the people, I experienced many times the sheer power music has to galvanise people to fight for change.

Indian classical music was born in the same paradigm that gave rise to yoga, meditation, and other forms of self-investigation and discovery. Even though it has become a concert art form, it still retains that inherent spirit of yoga or union, and the search for the ultimate truth.

In the pursuit and study of this music, it becomes succinct that one cannot seek, worship, or create beauty without being aware of its destruction. Intense practise of art and music can articulate many facets of nature in a subliminal way, which soon influences one's thinking and outlook toward life. Like mathematics, art and music can describe aspects of one's surroundings, but in an elusive way that gives rise to very sharp and unadulterated observation.

The indirect influence on my values was also furnished by my many masters who led me down this path. Also, having my first music lessons at Tolstoy Farm, in the house where Gandhi lived during his stay in South Africa, made me acutely aware of the struggle for human-rights in other countries.

Collaboration with musicians from many different countries has made me a devotee of diversity and the beauty it shares. I constantly search for the perfect sound and phrase, elusive as that is, but am convinced that if I find it, I will know all that is to be known.



Marya Stark | COMPOSER, PERFORMER & VOCALIST

Music is a major passion for me as an artist and a human. There are so many ways that creative expression expands our capacities for love and understanding. Like most people, I have had experiences of feeling lots of anger, hurt, and frustration. In some of those moments, I heard a song that spoke into the pain I was feeling. The words, the feeling of the song expressed exactly what I was going through. There was this sense of being understood or empathized by the artist. It helped me to relax and see beyond my story; move the uncomfortable energy that was in my body; mourn the emotion; and see the situation with greater clarity. I have also had moments where writing a song could do the same thing. Through words and melody, a voice was given to emotions when they seemed all-consuming. In the next moment, there is a greater awareness of what I could not see beyond my experience of contraction, tension, or fear. It broke my heart open into massive love.

Music has this incredible way of bringing people together; for causes, for celebrations, for struggles, for breakthroughs.

Because of this, and more, music has so much to give to the world. All people relate to music on some level. It touches everyone. Music has this incredible way of bringing people together—for causes, for celebrations, for struggles, for breakthroughs. Music builds containers for holding the sacred expression of what it is to be alive, and as such music communicates the spectrum of humanity. We are such beautiful, complex, organic creatures, and music shows every side, without holding back. We cannot hide from the human experience when inside the song. As such, it can be a great medium for sharing uplifting messages, holding the spirit of our willingness to thrive and triumph over the very dense and strange circumstances on which we collectively find ourselves.

Music has been one of the greatest teachers in my life. Music has helped me to heal a thousand broken hearts, given me strength to love again, and given me purpose. It has helped me to see parts of myself, like looking in a mirror. Seeing those parts has helped me to grow out of limiting patterns and develop new ways of being in the world. Music has helped me connect to thousands of people, building a tribe of like-minded community. Music has helped me feel a connection to all beings, across the planet and beyond. It helps me feel a connection to all forces, visible and invisible. Music has been my closest ally and my deepest connection to the great eternal beloved. I will always cherish it and share it with as many people as possible.









Valarien | COMPOSER, GUITARIST & PRODUCER

Music is one of the most transformative forces in the human experience. It has a universal power to transcend all boundaries and penetrate straight to the human heart, making it an unparalleled power to heal the psyche and liberate the spirit. Throughout our lives, the energies of pain and suffering that are an inevitable part of life on earth and the human condition can get lodged in our entire body, mind, and spirit. It takes an equal and opposite vibration to free these stuck energies, and nothing releases these emotions and frees the soul better than music. Healing cannot truly happen without forgiveness and love, and this can often be very difficult to achieve without outside influence. We are drawn to music in both our joy and our pain. In its inspirational vibrations and messages of truth, we are free to feel deeply and unreservedly, and in doing so be guided to our liberation and wholeness.

In music we are all together, in music we are all one.

There is a reason why music is in every aspect of our lives, from entertainment to worship. Probably more songs are written about love, the secular and the sacred, than about any other subject. Music speaks to all of us with the same universal truth, and few things can better carry us in our need or better inspire our love. In music we are all in harmony together, and only when we are in it together can the love and forgiveness we all need be shared for the greater wholeness of humanity.

My father was a blues guitar player and an alcoholic. He suffered greatly in his life, and there was much anger and bitterness in him, which made our lives very difficult. It was from him that my love of the guitar and music came. It was through our mutual love of music, the guitar, and its gift in our lives that forgiveness, love, and healing were made possible in ways nothing else could provide. In all my experiences as a musician performing and sharing music with others, performer and participant have been lifted up and healed in more ways than I could ever fully describe. I am forever grateful for the gift of music in my life and in the world. In music we are all together, in music we are all one.



Shakrah Yves | ARTIST & COSTUME DESIGNER

Art, music or any creative expression transforms our ability to love and forgive. To paraphrase the novel The Alchemist, our deepest desires and dreams, not the things we are told to want by our parents or society, but the things that we deeply want and we don't know why, those desires originate in the heart of the universe, and if you really work for them the world will conspire to help you.

I believe that we each have a creative spark that lies dormant. Perhaps we all won't be pop stars; maybe one's spark is baking amazing cupcakes. We all need to pay attention to that inner voice that tells us to make something. I used to worry that being an artist was selfish. I enjoy doing it, it gives me pleasure, so therefore it can't be entirely good. (Martyr complex here.) Making art is like a lyric from a great old American spiritual song, "This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine…"

The greatest gift that making art with others has given me is community.

Sharing art, dancing, and music is a gift. It's a gift to those we share it with and if you have that spark, it's your duty to share it. This brightens one's little corner of the world and starts a wildfire that spreads from one person to the next, spreading inspiration and making the world slightly more interesting. It's really scary listing to your heart and following through. We expose ourselves, and we are vulnerable. I find that the things I'm most frightened of failing at (singing, dancing, showing a painting, or making a costume for a client) are the things that give me power, energy, and joy. When I pursue them, the world says: "Yes, we want you to do this!"

I think that when we are authentically ourselves we deeply accept ourselves, and in that we love and forgive ourselves. When we nurture ourselves we have a greater ability to love and accept others. We are more able to love and accept others' weaknesses and to support their goals, even if they seem far-fetched. Go climb that mountain, open a vegan pastry shop, take up knitting —whatever it is that gives you joy.

It's easy to commodify art in the pop realm, but I think that when art reveals our shared humanity, we are moved by the same notes and colors; we are all vulnerable; we all struggle to find joy and love. Art can remind us of our ability to create community in cooperative art projects and can empower us to create art, take political action, and look more deeply at our own lives and feelings.

I have only been singing professionally for a year and dancing for six months. I have been painting, making costumes, and doing performance art for several years, and I think my art will continue to transform my values. I've always been very self-critical, perhaps to a fault. When I am preparing for a show, I sing for an hour every day and dance for at least thirty minutes every day. I agonize over the details of every costume. With each successful project and each performance, I grow more confident in my abilities and I learn that I can do it. I don't worry about failing any more. There is no failing; you simply learn from your experiences. I have started to forgive myself when things do not go perfectly and to deeply know that I am good enough, smart enough, and skilled enough.



Anything that I want to see in the world, I must create myself, and I know that it is a gift. As I become my authentic self, I shed layers of fear and start to feel deeply that I am loved and become less critical toward others, which is very important. Keeping a band together and a dance group of twelve people together is not easy. One has to be flexible, forgiving, communicate effectively, work hard, be reliable and fair. The greatest gift that making art with others has given me is community. People: that's what life is about. Amazing, beautiful, talented people to collaborate with, expand my ideas, help me to create something even bigger than what I imagine on my own, and I learn from them.



Robin Spielberg | COMPOSER & PIANIST

Music feeds our souls and has the ability to reach us emotionally; there is an undeniable link between music, love, and forgiveness. Hans Christian Andersen once said, "Where words fail, music speaks." I have found this to be true, and perhaps it is for this reason that 90 percent of my compositions are wordless. How can I express the love I feel for my child or for the world? There are words, of course, and gestures that can express these emotions. However, when I compose a piece of music that encompasses my feelings, the strength of my intention is increased tenfold. I have noticed that music sung during prayer has the power of forgiveness; music sung, played, and heard during times of sadness and hardship can remove fear and transform us into loving beings. Music serves as a vehicle to release our feelings of anger, confusion, and agitation, and bring us to a place of love and joy.

Creating art is part of being human. Since the start of civilization, art has been used to not only decorate and adorn, but to communicate. Artistic images, music, structures—these are all used to communicate emotions and ideas, but they can also unify us and create a sense of community. Our artistic expression communicates human compassion, kindness, empathy, and understanding to the world, as well as the undeniable sadness, loneliness, and fears associated with being human. Music and art can transcend boundaries, religions, and cultures, and bridge the differences between us. From the drawings on cave walls to the woven fabrics in Tibet, to the impressionistic paintings of France





to the music of the African Desert, human beings have the ability to see the beauty in art and to be forever touched by it. On February 4, 2008, NASA beamed a piece of music into deep space. The piece chosen was "Across the Universe" by the Beatles. Beatles expert Martin Lewis is quoted as saying that particular song "transcends ages, borders, language, and other barriers." The action of transmitting this song demonstrates man's urgency to communicate through music, even if it means it is possible no one will ever hear it.

Music has always been very personal for me. I began composing music as a form of self-expression; music allowed me to escape, even if for just awhile, from feelings of sadness and isolation—emotions most of us experience at some point during our childhoods. I began creating music to serve as a soundtrack for my own life experiences and emotions, but I discovered a few years into my recording career that people from all different walks of life were connecting with it—that my music was providing meaning beyond my own realm of understanding. This in itself has transformed my values. It has made me see that every creative expression, be it music, the written word or visual art, has the power to connect with someone's emotional life. While not every piece of art will mean something to an individual, I see that the act of creating is as important as life itself.

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Saira Wasim | ARTIST & PAINTER

My art practice is like a therapeutic meditation. The six to eight hours in my studio soothes me and gives me great relaxation; I also get connected to my spiritual side as well. People get tired in their nine to five jobs; they indulge themselves in shopping, spas, transforming their outward appearances, possession of riches, and even then, they don't find inner peace and satisfaction. Nothing gives me joy and pleasure like painting something special or exploring great art pieces from other artists. I take my daily chores or 'to do list' as a creative experience, and put all the hues and cues into action. I also try to cultivate in my kids, whatever you do, even if you find it very 'boring', try to connect with your inner creativity, then you'll enjoy each and every part of the process. This will increase your happiness, productivity, and success more than you could possibly imagine.

Art preserves traditions, values, and contributes to our cultural survival.

The social and political changes in the world have always been accompanied by dramatic shifts in the international art world. Artists investigate contemporary, sensitive, and taboo issues of their societies. They address and involve communities in order to create change in their societies. Art preserves



traditions, values, and contributes to our cultural survival. These play an integral part in toppling dictatorships and corrupt governments; they depict what the media hides. As artists, we spend days and nights in our studios working in the realm of ideas, to communicate through our artistic languages to be part of a positive change.

Music, food, art, and every kind of creative expression break cultural and social boundaries. These all play a pivotal role in erasing cross cultural misunderstandings and prejudices; they unite and transform cultures to bring them together. I was born and raised in Lahore, Pakistan, the cultural capital of Pakistan, Lahori/Punjabi food, music, and folk art has been a blend of different cultures for centuries. Pakistan and India mostly share the same cultural and social values, before the partition of 1947 when they were one country. We have the same language, food, music, and artistic traditions. However, the media of each country has always portrayed the other as their enemies, and the government of each nation has always kept us in constant rivalry. After sixty years of a cold war between both nations, people have realized that the real culprit was the "Hate" not the neighbor. So I strongly believe that music and every kind of artistic activity can transcend boundaries to bring people towards peace and harmony.



Salman Ahmad | GUITARIST & MUSIC PRODUCER

We begin the life that God gave us as seeds. Whether we become musicians, poets, teachers, saints or sinners or soldiers, we are only on this earth for a short time. The season of the rose won't last forever, as Iqbal wrote. And while on earth, as our inner mystical wheel revolves, we must plant seeds of our own before we return to God.

The jihad never ends and my song remains the same. We are all connected and interdependent.

Darkness and light have alternated for at least the past twenty years in Pakistan, but one thing never changes: the people's spirit. The spirit of passion is in Pakistanis' DNA. But it's also in the perennial interest of the international community to help see to a thriving arts and culture community in Pakistan, and in the rest of the Muslim world. Artists and humanitarians are the strongest glue between cultures in a world divided by fear and threatened by terrorism.





Arts and culture can be mightier than the sword. The people are already going where the leaders should follow. On my tours of the U.S. or Europe, I'll often play before crowds that won't understand the Urdu and Punjabi lyrics I'm singing. But there are scores of people who want to know more about the verses of Bulleh Shah or Iqbal, and I'll get flooded with requests for translations or explanations. What gives my audiences and me hope for deeper ties between Islamic and Western culture is that there is love in those lyrics. And there can never be enough love, in any language.

I'm just one person who's trying to live out a journey of light. We can only wake up each day and go out and plow the fields, armed with our God-consciousness and a clear awareness of the purpose of our individual life. In my own case, I try to keep the focus on finding common ground through music and teaching. The jihad never ends and my song remains the same. We are all connected and interdependent.

Art stands in the front of history as the guide towards equality, unity, truth, and higher purpose.







Speech | POET & VOCALIST IN **ARRESTED DEVELOPMENT**

Art communicates directly with the soul. It bypasses even our brains, our intent, and our defenses. If a song conveys love and forgiveness, it can transform man to commit random acts of patience, grace, and compassion. It can become what provokes contagious and somewhat involuntary revolution, revealing the true purpose of our worldly struggles, which is to better understand the redemptive power of love.

Art is always on the forefront of godly ideas! Art stands in the front of history as the guide toward equality, unity, truth, and higher purpose. If the art is true to its purpose, it manipulates and brainwashes the sides of us that house selfishness and greed. My art has been a saving grace, a reminder, a light in very dark alleyways. It is a tool God has gifted me to keep me sane, focused, and motivated. It has been a savior.

Application

Q: In what ways have you seen art unite individuals or communities?

Q: How could you use art or music to transcend a difficulty in your own life?

Q: What value has the greatest ability to unite individuals or communities that are different?


LOVE
LIVE
FORGIVE

Encore

Love Live Forgive has provided insights from artists sharing their perspectives on artistry, love, forgiveness, compassion, healing, transformation, and unity—all through the lens of their rich and varied creative lives. In many cases, these intimate reflections have given us a glimpse into the inner life of creative individuals and demonstrated how their life journeys translate into outer expression and action in the world. Ultimately, the essays challenged, inspired, and compelled us to consider how love and forgiveness can be transformative values in everyday life.

From the individual to the community, we find opportunities for positive transformation throughout the pages of this book. Reflecting on DJ and producer Moby's perspective that; "forgiveness can really only be truly meaningful with self-awareness" we are reminded that regular attention to our thoughts and actions is the first step in understanding the role of these values. Some artists, like vocalist Erakah, feel that the values themselves transcend creative intention and ground us in our daily lives: "Music is a strong tool to either heal or destroy and love STILL covers all." Reflecting on the beneficent potential of music as a change agent, Author and musician, Ted Gioia reminds us not to underestimate the power of music to change hearts and minds." Finally, Speech, poet and vocalist in Arrested Development, summarizes the hope and potential of our creative, human lives: "Art stands in the front of history as the guide towards equality, unity, truth, and higher purpose."

Whose perspective has inspired you? Consider the lessons from this book and review your responses to each chapter. Perhaps as we become more aware of the role of love, forgiveness, or compassion in our lives, heightened through our creative approaches, we may see that the ability to share and experience these values is easier. **Love Live Forgive** illuminates that we are all practitioners in the art of living. How we choose to respond to people and situations in our lives can be seen as creative decisions. In this way we are all living works of art continually improving the authentic masterpiece of our lives.



About the Editor

Justin St. Vincent | DIRECTOR AND FOUNDER OF **XTREME MUSIC**

Justin St. Vincent is the Director and Founder of Xtreme Music, Managing Editor of a global collaborative book series, and pioneer of a highly acclaimed website embracing the beauty and diversity of Music and Spirituality. His published trilogy exploring The Spiritual Significance of Music (2009-2012, Xtreme Music) features exclusive interviews with many visionary musicians and writers. These unique anthologies explore the dynamic relationship between music and spirituality, sharing incredible insights from their experience, knowledge, and wisdom.

St. Vincent earned his degree in American Business Studies with Honors from the University of Wales, Swansea and the University of New Brunswick, Canada. Justin is a Member of the New Zealand Society of Authors, Member of the New Zealand Christian Writers Guild, an Associate Member of the Australasian Religious Press Association, Spirituality and Music in Education, and the Positive Music Association. He also served on the Fetzer Institute's Advisory Council for the Arts. Justin is married to Sara-Maria and they are based in Auckland, New Zealand.

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Our Mission: To foster awareness of the power of love and forgiveness in the emerging global community.

People across the globe, from all cultures and traditions, embrace love and forgiveness in daily life. These values are universally viewed as central to the fabric of humanity. Yet, the emerging global community has few institutions dedicated to deepening the understanding and fostering deeper awareness of these values. In this context, the Fetzer Institute pursues a unique role-working to investigate, activate, and celebrate the power of love and forgiveness as a practical force for good in today's world. We are interested in how people truly experience and understand love and forgiveness from their diverse points of view, especially from the perspective of their daily work in the world.

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